

A MODEL FOR REVITALIZING MEN'S  
MINISTRY: AN INTENTIONAL  
DISCIPLESHP PROCESS

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **A MODEL FOR REVITALIZING MEN'S MINISTRY: AN INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHP PROCESS**

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### **Mentors**

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This project addressed the problem of men not actively engaging in ministry or becoming disciples. The project's purpose was to develop a discipleship process to teach discipleship and engage men in ministry. If the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church participate in an intentional discipleship journey aimed toward their spiritual growth, then there will be an increase in their participation in Bible study, fellowship, and service within the church and community. A qualitative research and phenomenological design were used, capturing the experience of the men. The data revealed that men experienced spiritual growth, became engaged in ministry, and became disciples.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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I also want to express special thanks to my professional associates, Rev. Dr. William L. Lee, Dr. E. Wayne Harris, and Rev. Dr. Antione J. Hutchins, my peer associate, Rev. Roderick S. Parks, and my context associate Rev. David Dickey for all the support and guidance they provided to me throughout this program. They are amazing people that I will treasure for the rest of my life.

Special thanks, recognition, and appreciation are extended to my Pastor and spiritual father, Bishop Anthony G. Maclin, Pastor of The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square, for your love, inspiration, and support and for many opportunities that have provided priceless opportunities for me to grow and to learn. Surely, without the opportunities provided to me, I would not be the preacher/pastor and leader that I am today. Further, I would like to give special thanks and appreciation to Rev. Dr. Deborah Scarborough for not only the professional editing of my work but also for encouraging and inspiring me for many years as we came up through the ministerial ranks together at The Sanctuary.  
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I would also like to thank Dr. Wendy Deichmann, Dr. Ian Edwards and Dr. Darlene Cook, our faculty consultants, for being available to give guidance and overseeing my work to make sure that everything aligned correctly with my theme and purpose. I must also recognize the best semester cohort mates in the world, Roderick Parks, Diamond Brooks, Dennis Bouch, Jamaar Jones, and Scott Cunningham. You all remind me of a quote from a TV show that said: "*When you can't run, you crawl. And when you can't do that, you find someone to carry you.*" - Firefly. Thank you all for carrying me during this process when I couldn't run or crawl.

To the most loving members of Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Roanoke, VA. THANK YOU so much for your prayers and for allowing me the time and space to grow and study during this program. A special thank you to the brothers who participated in my project implementation. Your involvement and commitment were vital to my success. And to Ms. J. Shawntelle Hilton, thank you for selflessly assisting me throughout the project implementation phase to make sure that each session was well organized. I Love You All So Much and I am abundantly, absolutely indebted, and most of all eternally grateful, beyond words.

## **DEDICATION**

I first and foremost dedicate this entire doctoral work to the glory and honor of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is the absolute head of my life, for granting me the grace and strength that has made it possible to complete this Doctoral program.

This journey could not have been completed without the love and motivation of my beloved family and friends. For this reason, I dedicate this work to my sons, Sekuan and Anthony, Jr. (AJ). I hope that my accomplishment will make you proud of your father and encourage you to trust God, work hard, and believe that you can go far beyond any limitation that life places in front of you. I also lovingly dedicate this work to my parents: (Mother) Sylvia, (Father) Benjamin, and to the loving memory of my (Bonus Mom) Charlene for their unfailing love and prayers. And, to my siblings Tonya, Chris, Rhonda, Alex, and Erin. I love you all!

I am grateful to my covenant brothers Dr. George Parks, Dr. James Jackson, Dr. Nathan Scovens, Dr. Sheridan Nelson, Dr. Charles Goodman, Dr. Phillip Pointer, Dr. Antione Hutchins, Pastor Benjamin Adams, Pastor Kenneth Rioland, and Pastor Roderick Parks for the encouragement and love shown throughout this program. Finally, I dedicate this work to the memory of my friend and Godbrother for life, Pastor Bryce A. Jones. No doubt, just as I was strongly persuaded to enroll in this program, I would've eventually done the same for you and you would've made it through at the top of your class. I know that the journey would've not only made you better, but you would've made the journey,

the school, and your cohort mates better just by being you. God had another plan, so I earned this for both of us! We'll celebrate together one day.

## **ABREVIATIONS**

AATF	Asian American Theological Forum
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
CSB	Christian Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version
LACC	Loudon Avenue Christian Church
NKJV	New King James Version
NLD	National League for Democracy
NLT	New Living Translation
WWJD	What Would Jesus Do?
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## **INTRODUCTION**

My experience in pursing the Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary has been a paradoxical journey. During these three years I have experienced some of the best times of my life and ministry career that left me feeling a sense of soaring, however, I have also experienced some of the worst times of life that have left me lost and with a sense of longing. Navigating the multiple paths of ministry work, family, personal development, and self-care has certainly helped me to find new ways to remain focused in my faith. I have been pulled and stretched mentally, emotionally, financially, and physically. I've suffered the loss of dear friends, supportive church members, and close family members alike, while at the same time gaining and getting to know some of the best people/peers who will forever be a part of my journey beyond this program. The process of the program really taught me to see how every experience of my past, both good and bad, has had a great impact on and driven my purpose and passion in Ministry.

Finally, if I had to use one word to describe this doctoral journey that word would be “gratifying”. Though the journey had its many moments that were difficult, every moment has been worth it. Despite the challenges and hardships encountered in pursuing the completion of this program, everything that has been learned and lost has all been an intentional part of the process to reshape me.

This thesis (and subsequent project) is entitled “A Model for Revitalizing Men’s Ministry: An Intentional Discipleship Process.” This thesis and project came about after much prayer, reflection, and ministry observation.

Loudon Avenue Christian Church sees approximately sixty men attend weekly worship; however, only a fraction of them actively engages in ministry outreach opportunities, Bible study, and serving in leadership roles. The area of ministry that this project addressed within the Loudoun Avenue Christian Church (LACC) was discipleship, specifically men’s discipleship. The Men’s Ministry of LACC has the least participation among the main ministry groups within the church such as the women’s ministry and youth ministry. Although the Men’s Ministry, known as Disciple Men’s Fellowship, provided opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, Christian education, and creative ministries to enable men to develop a sense of personal growth, very few were connecting with the church outside of weekly worship experiences on Sunday mornings.

There had never been a defined process implemented that would help to guide men through intentional progression which resulted in their spiritual growth and produced a stronger ever-growing core group of men that would continue the work of strengthening and developing their lives while also supporting other men embracing and undergoing the very same spiritual growth journey. If the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church go through this process of participating in an intentional discipleship journey aimed toward their spiritual growth, then there will be an increase in their participation in Bible study, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

The basis for this project was found in the process that the early disciples went through as they were led by Jesus Christ to become the Apostles, early leaders, and driving forces of the early church and serve as models for the modern-day church. The process of becoming a disciple was not completed overnight, nor was it fully realized with just one encounter, conversation, sermon, lesson, or witnessing of a single miracle, but it took time. In the time those disciples spent following Jesus, there were many repeated lessons and misunderstandings before the disciples grew into what Christ had called them to be. So too was our approach to developing men into effective disciples. The process did not seek to rush spiritual growth but to take the necessary time to walk through every phase of the journey with individuals sharing feedback on where they see their development/growth. The remainder of this section will outline how each chapter of this document evolved.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, speaks to four areas primarily. First, it references my Spiritual Autobiography, where I reflect on my life and that of my current ministry context, Loudon Avenue Christian Church (LACC), highlighting how the two are similar. It points out similar reliance on relationship bonds to foster disciples, the assumption that discipleship is caught and understood at the moment one enters membership, the thought that membership and discipleship are one in the same, and leadership not knowing where to begin in identifying, developing, and implementing an effective method of discipleship growth. Secondly, it explores the importance of covenant in discipleship and how discipleship is meant to grow from a covenantal relationship that is founded in Christ and expressed to one another and through one another. Thirdly, this section sheds light on a synergy where my spiritual journey and service in ministry intersect with my context,

where I now serve as pastor, Loudon Avenue Christian in Roanoke, Virginia. This section highlights my progressive ministry experience at my home church, The Sanctuary at Kingdom Square. This experience grew from me serving in various ministries to me being employed as the full-time Multimedia Coordinator and Minister to Youth and Young Adults. Fourthly, this section explores the uniqueness of the discipleship journey, research on the church community, costly grace, and the necessity of teaching discipleship in the church. Specifically, the need for relationship building that can be translated into disciple-making, which connect with my gifts for ministry, and has led to a thesis and project on developing a viable discipleship process to help men mature in their spiritual growth to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

In chapter two, the Biblical Foundations on which this project is grounded is explored and fully discussed and expounded. Luke 5:1-11 is the New Testament text that I chose because it highlights the first call of the early disciples. The passage models Jesus not waiting for persons to come to Him and then teaching them how to be a disciple, but it showed Jesus going to where they were, entering what was familiar to them and transforming it and ultimately them into what He desired for them to be. This section concludes with the assertion that discipleship is a journey.

Chapter three, historical foundations, reflects on the historical roots of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) of which the initiation of a Bible study group for young men and intentional discipleship can be traced. It begins by pointing out that Christianity isn't necessarily easy and that being a disciple of Jesus Christ presents many challenges and sacrifices. This section highlights the Evangelical purpose of the YMCA;

YMCA focus on training and salvation; the establishment of the first YMCA for blacks; YMCA mission, vision, strong communities; and the modern-day YMCA.

Chapter four, Theological Foundations, expounds on some of the theological framework that speaks to what a disciple is and what true discipleship looks like. The theology of discipleship is examined in the context of discipleship being a roadmap of the process that Jesus took with the early disciples and that we can still embrace and implement today. There is a discussion of this intimate discipleship process being founded on teaching the commands and truths of Christ.

Chapter five, Interdisciplinary Foundations, explores the discipline of transformational leadership. This section demonstrates how transformation leadership can model intentional discipleship in the church due to it placing emphasis on how the relationship between leaders and followers help each other advance to a higher level of being and becoming. This section emphasizes that through intentional transformative leadership, consisting of teaching, training, study, and sharing in one another's life journey, men can experience spiritual growth, increase their engagement in ministry, and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Chapter six, Project Analysis, restates the project problem statement, hypothesis, and purpose. This section addresses the methodology used in the project to include project design and participants, collection of data, and goals of the discipleship training. As for the project implementation, it cites selection of participants, details of the training sessions, project data gathered, and supporting appendices. Lastly, it notes how this project can be replicated in other areas and concludes with a summary of learning to include project reflections, analysis of data, and its outcome.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

Through introspective reflection on my life, writing a Spiritual Autobiography, and meticulously examining my current Ministry Context as Senior Pastor of The Loudon Avenue Christian Church (LACC), I have gained a very enlightening perspective on where the two intersect. I realize that both my personal spiritual history and the history, as well as the present day of my church context, have intersected in a way that I believe enables me to now facilitate a more specific and intentional ministry study, focus, and development that will help to reinforce the spiritual growth and well-being of members of the congregation both current and new. More specifically, what I learned from the contextual analysis is that just as the church has grown as an influential beacon within the community over the last thirty plus years, it has also seen tremendous growth numerically when it comes to membership, however at the retirement of the former Pastor of thirty nine years and the calling of myself as the new Pastor, the growth did not include a structured Spiritual Discipleship plan for persons to embrace and journey through. Though the church, as many do, facilitate an assimilation process for membership, it unknowingly leaves the intricate work of intentional discipleship to a more catch as you go system instead of having in place an actual planned, guided, and evaluated process.

The contributing factors have been the reliance on relationship bonds to foster disciples, the assumption that discipleship is caught and understood at the moment one

enters membership, the thought that membership and discipleship are one in the same, a lack of an evaluating tool that helps to gauge where a person's growth as a disciple, or simply in leadership's not knowing where to begin in identifying, developing, and implementing an effective method of discipleship growth. When discussing this matter with senior leaders of other ministries, I was made aware that the lack of identifying and implementing a viable method of discipleship has manifested in several ways in various churches. Contextually as I have witnessed at LACC, the lack of a life changing discipleship journey in place has resulted in a few visible ways: (1) persons falling into the margins of being a member, (2) new members/believers assimilated into church, but not introduced to following Christ, (3) lack of understanding what discipleship is and what it looks like in present times, (4) not knowing how discipleship should impact one's life, and (5) lack of persons being willing to step into leadership roles.

These and other results, gone unchecked or unchanged, have the potential to shift the LACC culture to being a church filled with great harvest and potential but lacking workers. LACC being a Disciple of Christ Church, has several resources that it can begin to pull from as it seeks to engage and strengthen its understanding of discipleship and the covenant that exists between not only God and us; but also between one another. It will be important that as we seek to address and grow in discipleship that helps us to impact the world for The Kingdom of God, that we first understand what the discipleship relationship should look like amongst we who are disciples. Realizing this truth, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has within the last few years placed a large emphasis on engaging the conversation on covenant. The covenant disciple relationship is one that, again, is not only about our lives with God and in God, but each of us as

believers sharing in this experience of life together, journeying together, learning together, and growing together.

The importance of covenant in discipleship is at the forefront of what the Christian Church Disciples of Christ strives to embody within the world. The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), which is the governing document that is key to our common life together, begins with a Preamble that serves as an affirmation of our faith, an expression of hope, a call to service, and a reminder of “God’s covenant of love that binds us to God and to one another.” That covenant is written into the Preamble, but it is lived out through covenantal relationships in all expressions of the church. Discipleship then, is meant to go beyond that of just membership to or obtaining any position of leadership within a local congregation, rather it is to grow from a covenantal relationship that is founded in Christ and expressed to one another and through one another. I believe that, for disciples to be made as is our commissioned assignment given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 which states, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” there is a model that must first be established and adapted to create relational connectivity and covenant with one another on which the development of disciples can stand.

The intersection of my spiritual journey and ministry context sheds light on the fact that though I have never encountered or experienced an intentional process of being discipled, and there are others who have not been led through any kind of formal discipleship process, it is possible for disciples to be organically developed through

relationships, experiences, fellowship, worship, service, and other means. While an informal process has seen success in developing some disciples, the question becomes: should we strive to be more intentionally responsible about the discipling process? How much more effective could the church be if there was a thought out, tested, fluid and proved process in place that is unique to our ministry contexts that is solely focused on discipleship growing instead of only membership assimilation?

I am the direct result of an informal discipleship process. My discipling was born out of my relationship with my pastor and other positive, strong Christian male role models that mentored me at a young age. My pastor and the other ministers treated me like a godson or a little brother. Those relationships really helped me to stay close to church and ministry as a young man.

I was involved in Youth Fellowship Ministries & Choir, Boy Scouts, Teen Ministry, and the Multimedia Ministry. I then grew to be employed as the full-time Multimedia Coordinator and Minister to Youth and Young Adults. I would later go onto oversee Christian education to youth, teens, and young adults through lectures, Bible study, teaching, and sharing the word through preaching engagements in local churches and national conferences. I was also able to successfully implement new administrative structures to Young People's Christian Development Ministry and The Connected Young Adult Ministry that enhanced effectiveness in meeting spiritual needs of youth, teens, and young adults as well as facilitating and maintaining imperative dialogue and connection with parents. I gained a small amount of pastoral experience serving in a fulltime capacity under the close supervisions of my pastor as the Youth and Young Adult Pastor, serving young people of a thriving urban church with a membership exceeding 3,000

persons and a Young People's Christian Development Ministry that Ministered to 400+ youth, teens, and college students weekly. I learned how to be a consensus-builder with strong interpersonal and teamwork skills, a compassionate counselor with keen listening skills, and an experienced mediator: able to facilitate dialogue and resolutions.

The connection to my Pastor and others helped me see the human side of clergy as well as life as a Christian disciple. Witnessing them eat, tell jokes, laugh, have fun, and face struggles allowed me to see beyond what some only saw on Sunday mornings or in certain ministry moments. This would become crucial developmental experiences that helped me embrace the reality of my ministry calling as well as my serving others while remaining a real person with a great assignment from God. These experiences in my journey taught me that no matter how high of a position you may obtain in life or ministry, to be an effective disciple who is able to disciple others, you must remain grounded in the reality of the world in which we are called to serve and minister. From my personal journey I have also gained the understanding that every disciple's journey is unique, and that God divinely guides each of us through experiences that develop us as individuals and directs our paths to meet and merge to become a community of disciples.

I recall that experience that I shared from one of my early seminary classes, an exercise called the river. Groups of students shared a brief glimpse of their lives and journey that brought us to that point in being first year seminary students. As each group shared it was amazing to hear the various stories, to see the individual paths, the unlikely backgrounds of people that were all on their own streams in the world that had now converged into one river of life. It made an impact on me then and does now because it keeps in perspective the fact that no matter where we may meet one another on our

journey there is so much more to us. There is a past behind us that has shaped our way of thinking, communicating, engaging, and much more that who we are. Keeping this in mind has helped me and I believe helps each of us to grow as disciples. My experience has been that as disciples we are more often than not meeting new people and at times called to work with total strangers, and it is our responsibility in our modeling our lives after Jesus Christ that we must seek to embrace the truth that whether we like it or not, our meeting is just like those individual streams converging into one river that God has planned for us to become one along our journey.

I believe that Jesus never intended for the making of disciples to be some cookie-cutter process that can be found on the factory floor of a Christian warehouse and assembly line. Discipleship for us today is to be what it was for Christ's early disciples, a life-altering journey. In their eBook, *Discipleship that Fits*, authors Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom share that "Being a disciple of Jesus simply means that you are modeling your life, your thoughts, your words, your actions, your everything after the example and teaching Jesus has given us. And the related word *discipleship* simply refers to the process through which Jesus turns us into people who trust and follow him."<sup>1</sup> So, in their definition of a disciple and discipleship we first see the very vast difference between what merely is one who seeks to be a member of a church and one who seeks to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Now, in no way am I attempting to put down the use of the term member or membership when it comes to our church vernacular.

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<sup>1</sup> Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, "Discipleship That Fits," <https://www.discipleship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Discipleship-That-Fits-eBook.pdf>.

I find it very important to view our membership or being a member of a local church by way of our being a part of God's body, more so than being a member of an organization, as the Apostle Paul explains in his letter to the church in Corinth; in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (NLT):

The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So, it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So, God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

Even in this view of our connection to God through Jesus Christ, and our being joined together in Christ as one body, we can find solid ground on which to stand when it comes to the necessity of understanding our roles as disciples in the body of Christ as well as proper guidance, teaching, and development in becoming strong, supporting, and productive members of the body.

Ultimately, what must be understood is the impact that is made on one's whole life once they commit to following Jesus and modeling one's life after Jesus' life. There is inherently attached to the life of a disciple not only the journey of personal spiritual

growth that takes place, but also the responsibility of helping others to begin their own unique spiritual journey to experiencing and embracing a relationship with Christ, and ultimately committing to following and modeling their lives after Christ as well.

A passion that began to grow with in me during the time that I served as a youth pastor and because of my being intentional about placing my focus on growing the hearts of young people to have a spiritual sensitivity toward persons who are in need and are less fortunate, was my own desire for meeting people where they are and being a help to them. That passion continues to grow as I now strive to lead in making connections and commitments to community service within LACC's culture. This being a key component to the work of disciples, it is important that we not only identify areas of need within the community that we are called to serve but be intentional about engaging in the work that would meet those needs, and to also challenge and change the negative narrative that may hinder persons from engaging the church itself as a source of help and hope. This also is the work of discipleship, spreading the gospel message of Jesus Christ through word and action in hopes that others would find and embrace a soul-saving relationship that evolves into new disciples being grown.

Not only does the current understanding of discipleship account for a major part in addressing the culture within LACC, but also knowing the current view of disciples and the church through the lens of the community is important. Prior to and, by God's grace, post the year and a half COVID-19 pandemic quarantine that had many churches close their doors and restrict in person worship, LACC was and remains one of several thriving church congregations in the Roanoke Valley area. And as discovered in the Ministry Contextual Analysis taken within a three mile radius of where the church sits,

there exists a number of persons that do not connect with or engage in churches such as LACC for a number of reasons that I believe are worth taking note of, especially when it has to do with the actual or perceived spiritual character and/or authenticity of the persons that make up those congregations. According to the data collected and compiled from the U.S. Census Bureau, Experian, and Decision InSite/Mission InSite some of the reasons why persons in the community do not engage include: strongly feeling that religious people are too judgmental, persons don't believe in God, feeling that Religion is too focused on money, some have experienced disappointment with religion, others do not connect because of the demands of family/raising children, they have relocated from community, are unsure about their personal beliefs, lack of trust in religious leaders, no longer believe, and some have experienced conflicts in religious community.

From this data we can determine that when it comes to making new disciples of unsaved or unchurched persons from within the community there exists several barriers that must be engaged and overcome. Though all the reasons listed cannot be addressed and remedied overnight, this allows us to, in our times of study, training and preparation as disciples to know what negatively impacting views of the church and of, we who are called disciples must be ready to disarm in and by our service and outreach to others. That same survey reveals that there are other reasons/major life concerns present within this demographic that keep persons from engaging with local churches and for some religion all together, those concerns include: financing their future/savings/retirement, Day-to-day financial matters, Health/Losing weight/diet issues, focusing on reaching their life goals/being successful in their careers, personal health problems, fear of the future or the unknown, Making the right choices/finding direction, obtaining a satisfying

job/career, concerns about Health crisis/illness, Stress/finding time to relax, becoming care givers for aging parents, fulfilling desires and expectations in marriage/romance & intimacy, battling depression, and others are concerned about making time for friends/family.

From this additional data we discover a truth that is not a surprising one, that is though there may be for some people who are in the demographic hesitations when it comes to trusting the church and its leader(s), understanding religion, or believing in God there is a great need for the Ministry of the church to exist in the community, which means that there is an even greater need for trained and committed disciples to carry on this work that does not remain at the church building waiting for the people of the community to come to it, but rather to go out from the church to meet the needs of the people right where they are. LACC in the past has made a great impact on the community by addressing some of these very issues listed. One area is the concern for health and physical well-being. For years, the community where the church is had been neglected when it came to accessible health care services. My predecessor Rev. Dr. William Lee, after personally experiencing the sickness and death of his father, created and birthed the beginning of a health facility in the basement of Loudon Ave Christian Church and is now the Founder of New Horizon Healthcare, formally called Kumba. New Horizon Healthcare is in the Northwest community of Roanoke Virginia and helps individuals from all walks of life, regardless of their ability to pay.

Although LACC is a congregation of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, ironically, the current vast understanding of discipleship relates to membership to a local church or as I stated earlier, for some, there is a thought

that membership equates to discipleship. Being a Disciple, however, is not about where you go: it is about who you follow. Discipleship is not about where you are: it is about who you are. Discipleship is not about what you know: it is about what you believe.

Essentially, it is more about who you are and what you do! This is true for both sides of the coin: it is just as important for the one who teaches, trains, and guides people in and through the discipleship process as it is for those being developed to know that. Harrington and Absalom give a simple yet powerful explanation as to who a disciple is and what a disciple does. They write that “discipleship or disciple making is helping people trust and follow Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> They explain further: “*trust* covers all the teachings in the Bible that call us to rely on God’s grace, promises, and power. *Follow* encompasses all the teachings in the Bible that require us to respond to God in obedience, faithfulness, and resistance to sin.”<sup>3</sup> Discipleship then has a complete reliance on one’s faith. Faith in the Son of God and in the word of God to serve as the both the model and manual for our lives as disciples. As we strive to pattern our lives after Jesus Christ, Trust is essential in that there becomes a reliance on God to be present and display His power in our lives just as it was displayed in the life of Jesus Christ. The scripture that comes to my mind whenever there is a discussion about trusting in God is Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart; And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” These verses boast well of the power

<sup>2</sup> Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, “Discipleship That Fits,” <https://www.discipleship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Discipleship-That-Fits-eBook.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, “Discipleship That Fits,” <https://www.discipleship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Discipleship-That-Fits-eBook.pdf>.

of trusting in God as well as the promise that God will be faithful to guide in the proper path all that do trust in Him and depend on Him.

Discipleship at its core is trusting God enough to submit our will to His will and our way to His way. That other essential part of discipleship highlighted is follow. Following calls our faith to action and moves our trusting to testing. It is where we put on display our resolve to go beyond what we have heard said to us and fulfill the purpose that has been assigned to us. While following our level of obedience is the object of focus. Following Christ can at times present more challenges for disciples because it is possible that there will be moments that one feels as if they are the only one following, moments where following Christ creates vulnerability to others, and yes when following Christ seems foolish. Because of this, I believe it is important that the process of disciple making be one that is filtered through a lens of transparency.

Having grown up in church and being around and serving in Ministry for several years, I noticed throughout my journey there were at times a lack of transparency when it comes to our sharing the Gospel message and welcoming persons into relationship with Christ and never really in most settings. In other words, I believe that just as excited as we are to share congratulations with new believers, or for existing believers who began to grow in discipleship, we should just as soon share with them not only the meaning of, but also the cost of discipleship. German theologian and author Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, in which he shares what he believes it means to follow Christ as he takes a detailed look at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. In one of the more popular points in the book he focuses on the difference between what he calls “cheap grace” and “costly grace,” saying, in short of cheap grace: “Cheap grace is grace

without discipleship.” What resonates with me even more is what he said concerning the latter, his view of what he calls “Costly grace”, as quoted in Goodreads.com:

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘Ye were bought at a price’, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.<sup>4</sup>

The acknowledgment here of costly grace is not just one that is important to highlight in hopes of informing believers of what the discipleship cost is to each of us individually, but first what it cost Christ to call us into discipleship, it cost His life. Considering that it cost Christ so much to redeem us from our sins and to reconcile us back to God, and it is He who we as believers and disciples Model our lives after and follow, then it should be understood that discipleship will cost us our lives as well. This is what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 16:24-26 when he said:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?’

This scripture places the cost of our following Jesus Christ to the forefront of our faith. It encourages that discipleship begin with denying ourselves what may be our natural desires, instincts, thoughts, and will and faithfully embracing the will, thoughts, actions, and heart of Christ. This is a key lesson that must be amongst the first taught and

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<sup>4</sup> Goodreads.com, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer Quotes,” <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/300616-costly-grace-is-the-gospel-that-must-be-sought-again>.

understood once the fire of discipleship is ignited within the heart of a believer.

Discipleship is a process that involves a believer spreading truths about God and it requires us to teach and share those truths, all the truths of God, even the ones may be difficult to understand.

Just as people matter to God; and so too people should matter to us. Discipleship matters to God; and so too discipleship should matter to us. Harrington and Absalom have also said that “Discipleship matters because it is at the center of what Jesus has commissioned his followers to be about. Not only does discipleship summarize God’s interactions with us, but it should be the primary way we invest ourselves in others.”<sup>5</sup> The work of disciple making and the work that Christ’s disciples do matter to the overall Kingdom work that God does in the world. This work is an ongoing work that begun with the calling of those early disciples who physically walked with Jesus and carried on to those believers then and now that would hear the message of salvation to this very day.

When viewing the intersection of my spiritual journey and the ministry context which I serve, I find a need to identify a starting point to address the issue of taught discipleship within the church. Though I believe that the church as a whole will ultimately benefit from a reimagined and reenergized perspective of discipleship and a new process that would help to intentionally make disciples by guiding believers through an planned process, considering the size of our congregation, the current various methods in which we hold meetings, classes and worship with safety precautions due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, there is a need to begin the process with a smaller

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<sup>5</sup> Bobby Harrington and Alex Absalom, “Discipleship That Fits,” <https://www.discipleship.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Discipleship-That-Fits-eBook.pdf>.

demographic within the church. In reviewing the demographic data of LACC, and seeing that as of our last DOC yearbook entry participation in specific groups varies from month to month, however on average we see forty to fifty Women Participating in Disciple Women Groups, twenty-five to thirty Men Participating in Disciple Men Groups, and twenty to twenty-five Youth/Teens Participating in activities and studies for young people, this information along with knowing that our Men's Ministry has the least participation of the other main ministry group such as the women and young people, it would be prudent to begin with the development of a discipleship focus aimed at that group. Currently our Men's Ministry, known as Disciple Men, intends to provide opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, education, and creative ministries; to enable men to develop a sense of personal growth; and to support the whole mission of the church.

The group of men, for the past several years, has been meeting on the third Saturday of every month around 9:30 a.m. in the fellowship hall of the church. The gathering consisted of breakfast that was cooked by a couple of the men who volunteered, brotherly fellowship and conversation, a brief Bible devotion and prayer, and then discussion on any business matters such as planning future outreach activities, outings, events etc. It was really a great time to get to know one another and find encouragement amongst fellow Christian brothers. The only thing that we have noticed over the last few years is the difference in the number of men who participate in that gathering and the number of men we have in our congregation and attend worship as well as those who are involved in Ministry outreach opportunities and who step up to leadership roles. While we could have on any given Sunday over sixty men who attend

worship, we may only see fifteen to twenty on a consistent basis for fellowship and the same person who are active in outreach.

Along with that ninety-five percent of our ministries are chaired by women and eighty-five percent of our volunteer base are women. The largest and most consistent concentration of men are those who sing in the men's choir which twenty voices, many of whom are the brothers who participate in the monthly gathering. It is not that we are number driven, or in any way suggest that there is a problem with most of leadership being women; however, we have several concerns:

1. We are unable to engage with those men in a setting outside of worship that allows for relationships to be built.
2. We are unable to develop new leaders.
3. Several women have expressed that there is a lack of men willing to step up to serve, especially during times of community outreach opportunities.
4. There is a lack of mentors for young people.
5. Perhaps the greatest concern is the lack of space to develop relational discipleship experiences that lead to spiritual growth.

During Covid, about three months into the government mandated quarantine, we invited the men to share with us on a zoom call gathering that was held at our time of 9:30 a.m. and because we had been disconnected for a time, we met every other Saturday mornings, just to check in on and catch up with one another. We noticed a few new men connected with us and were very happy to have that space to share and receive encouragement during a time that was full of so many uncertainties. Once able to get back out into the community we did a service project at a local community garden where

we were asked to plant some fruit trees. That day we had the largest gathering of men to participate in an outreach opportunity in a while. Throughout that day of service, we had various conversations, we learned about the garden together, worked together, and saw a glimpse of a new way of engaging our men in our context. That experience, though only a singular occurrence, provides a hope for relationship building that can be translated into disciple-making.

The men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church also show promise in the area of organic growth in learning who they are individually and having a willingness to share that with others as well as growing to know who we are together. When asked to serve in the capacity of preparing meals for our annual Easter Breakfast as well as our Black History Month heritage feast, the men rallied together to accomplish the task as a unified band of brothers. From creating menus, shopping, team scheduling, venue set-up, food prep, serving, and clean-up the entire process was meant to bring the men together physically for service. However, what we have noticed, that was not planned, were the conversations that would take place. It would almost take on the identity of a group therapy session in action while many topics would be discussed such as our family upbringing, educational journeys, plans that were made and deferred and how we coped with them, relationships, marriage, divorce, children, fatherhood, careers, health, current goals and accomplishments, and so much more would be discussed and everyone was able to weigh in on the subjects at hand. This created an impromptu discipleship culture that would help the men to get to know one another and for that moment begin to journey alongside someone else in their life.

There is a greater need for this kind of natural or unplanned and unpressured growth amongst the men of Loudon Avenue's Men's Ministry and in the greater church. The challenge would be for leaders to consistently create opportunities for such moments to take place and creatively encourage the conversations to become the hallmark of our times of service, fellowship and discipleship.

In conclusion, the synergy identified results in a need for the development and implication of a viable process at Loudon Avenue Christian Church that is utilized to help members mature in their spiritual growth to becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The Biblical Foundations is designed to present a pericope that has been studied and relates to this project topic. Herein lies the problem being addressed by this project. As churches have grown as influential beacons within communities, experiencing tremendous growth numerically when it comes to membership, the growth has failed to include an intentional discipleship process for persons to embrace and through which persons can journey. Though many churches facilitate an assimilation process for membership, the lack of a viable method of life-changing discipleship has resulted in visible consequences, especially with the men in the church. These consequences include persons falling into the margins of being a member, new members or believers being assimilated into church without being introduced to following Christ, persons lacking an understanding of what discipleship is and what it looks like in present times, persons failing to know how discipleship should impact one's life, and the church lacking persons being willing to step into leadership roles.

This project proposes to develop and implement an intentional discipleship process, within the Men's Ministry, designed to reimagine and reenergize the perspective of discipleship. An effective discipleship process would involve the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church participating in an intentional discipleship journey that would

result in them experiencing spiritual growth and increasing their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

This section includes an exegesis of Lk 5:1-11 which shares the calling of Jesus' First Disciples. This account in Luke's gospel is a pivotal moment in the ministry life of Jesus Christ and serves as the inaugural calling of His disciples. It shows that one's obedience to answer Christ's call on their life, and to exhibit faith in Him can be the catalyst for the changing of one's direction and identity in life. As Christians, when we make the conscious decision to answer the call to trust in Christ, we are blessed to be made a part of the will and work of God that continues in the search for those who are not in a relationship with God by inviting them to follow Christ.

What makes Luke's account of this moment most relevant to discipleship revitalization is his undeniable interest in people and how their lives are impacted uniquely in each account. Although Luke was not one of the original twelve disciples, his writings have certain features that are not found in other Gospels, such as the special attention to the Holy Spirit and prayer. These and many other inclusions provide insight into Luke as a person and his embracing and understanding of Christianity. Much of what Luke shares throughout this Gospel highlights Jesus' intentional and intimate interactions with others. Luke takes care to assure that Jesus is not only seen as a highly exalted Messiah and Messenger but also as the fully divine man that was sent to minister and show compassion to all people. Jesus is found journeying through this Gospel illustrating His deep and enduring care for people, regardless of what they have done or their status in society. His compassion would be shown to people of varying statuses, cultures, genders, and religious backgrounds.

Luke's attention to detail surrounding persons whom Jesus interacted with is important because it first helps give the reader the ability to see ourselves in the text as ones who have also received the gracious gift of a life-changing encounter with Christ and second, it gives a clear picture of the way in which Christ's followers are to also engage in the lives of persons who may be considered socially or religiously unacceptable. Luke's accounts of Christ's ministry reveal that Jesus often disregarded the cues that would have helped him avoid social stigma and instead interacted with outcasts, sinners, the immoral, the least, the last, and the lost.

What we learn from the selected scripture text as well as many other encounters between Jesus and such persons is that discipleship, be it the initial call into it or the call to return to it, is best approached with individuals on grounds that they are familiar with. That is to say that the process of calling, creating, and encouraging persons into discipleship happens most effectively when believers and potential believers are met and ministered to where they are. Jesus shows us in the Gospel of Luke that discipleship does not put a stop to our individual lives, rather it simply redefines, refocuses, and reimagines how we do life together for the glory of God.

The conclusion of this section summarizes these biblical principles for developing and implementing an intentional discipleship process. This process will expound on the following components of the original call of the original disciples as presented by Steve Murrell in his article entitled “Responding to the Discipleship Call”:

1. Corporate response.

Jesus saw discipleship as a group project. Sometimes He called individuals, but usually He called small groups of people to follow Him. It seems that with our Western Evangelical emphasis on “accepting Jesus as personal savior” we often miss the corporate nature of Biblical Christianity. The New Testament pattern of

evangelism and discipleship was generally a group effort. Consider the following accounts:

- An angel told Cornelius that Peter would preach a message through which you and all your household will be saved. (Acts 11:13)
- When Peter and Luke ministered in Philippi a businesswoman named Lydia, and all the members of her household were baptized.
- When Paul, Silas, and Timothy preached in Corinth, a synagogue ruler named Crispus and his entire household believed in the Lord.
- As Crispus began to testify, many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8) The message that saved whole households then will do the same today. As we make disciples we should expect a group response, not just individual responses.

#### 2. Urgent response.

Peter and Andrew responded to the call to discipleship at once and James and John responded immediately. We have all seen small children stall when parents declare that it is now bedtime. Sometimes they pretend they did not hear, other times they negotiate for more play time. When Jesus calls us to follow, we should respond with urgency as His original disciples, not as small children who stall and negotiate.

#### 3. Purposeful response.

While they did not know exactly where they would go as they began to follow Jesus, they did know what they would be doing. They knew they would be fishing for men, not just randomly wandering from village to village. There was a clear purpose and task for the original twelve that still applies today to all who follow Jesus.

#### 4. Sacrificial response.

Peter and Andrew left their nets when they started following Jesus. James and John left the boat and their father to follow Jesus. All four of these men were fishermen. Answering the call to discipleship cost these men their careers. They left nets, boats, and fishing partners behind. Not everyone is called to a career change, but everyone who follows Jesus must leave something behind. Obviously, we all must leave sinful habits, activities, and relationships behind. But we also may need to leave some things behind that are not evil or sinful.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Murrell, “Responding to the Discipleship Call,” <https://stevemurrell.com/responding-to-the-discipleship-call>.

### Lk 5:1-11

The introduction to this gospel indicates that the letter was composed with the purpose of providing a careful representation of the events of Christ's life in chronological order. There is unmistakable evidence that points to Luke being the author of this Gospel, even though the author's name does not appear in the book. The authorship of Luke's Gospel cannot be thoroughly discussed without emphasizing its companion book, *The Acts of The Apostles*, or *Acts*. In view of the language and structure of the two books, as well as the fact that they are addressed to the same individual, Theophilus, and the fact that the latter of the two, which is *Acts*, refers to the first letter, the Gospel of Luke, we can conclude that the same person wrote both books. Luke was most likely a Gentile by birth who was well-educated in Greek culture. He was a physician by profession and a companion of the Apostle Paul at various times, beginning with his second missionary journey to his final imprisonment in Rome. Luke was a loyal companion who remained with the apostle.

Most scholars date the composition of the combined work to around 80–90 CE, although some others suggest 90–110 CE.<sup>2</sup> The place of Luke's writing was probably Rome, though scholars have also suggested Achaia, Ephesus, and Caesarea. The place to which it was sent would, of course, depend on the residence of Theophilus. By its detailed designations of places in the Holy Land, the Gospel seems to be intended for

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<sup>2</sup> James H. Charlesworth, *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), 42.

readers who were unfamiliar with that land. Antioch, Achaia, and Ephesus are possible destinations.

The Gospel of Luke is one of the books of the Bible that clearly states the purpose of the writer. Luke opens the book by saying:

Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught. (Lk 1:1-4)

Luke is writing to inform Theophilus and reinforce the truthfulness of the Gospel message that Theophilus had already heard. Author David L. Balch suggests that “Luke was written to be read aloud to a group of Jesus-followers gathered in a house to share the Lord’s supper.”<sup>3</sup> This would mean that the same goal for Theophilus to receive the Gospel message and believe in its truth is the aim for all who would later read this Gospel. It is not meant to provide an account of historical events that would help to defend the Christian faith, but rather it is a detailed account to encourage faith in Christ.

The theme of Luke’s Gospel is that Jesus is for everybody as Luke portrayed Jesus as the world’s ideal man and God’s ideal representation of Himself, who offers salvation to both Jews and Gentiles alike. Luke does so in his inclusion of Christ’s declaration: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk 19:10). This revelation from Christ is shared as He displays His being for all people by one account found in Lk 19, where we see Jesus’ encounter in Jericho with Zaccheus, a Jewish tax collector, who collected taxes for Rome. Zaccheus had achieved great wealth

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<sup>3</sup> David L. Balch, “Luke,” In Dunn, James D. G.; Rogerson, John William (eds.), Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible. Eerdmans, 2003, 1104.

through his tax collection enterprise and through some illegitimate means as well. He was a man short in stature, who upon hearing that Jesus was nearby, sought to see Him but could not because of the large crowds. So, he had to climb a tree to get a glimpse as Jesus approached the town. Jesus ended up sharing a meal with Zaccheus at his house, much to the disappointment of the local religious leaders. When Zaccheus expressed his regret over his misdeeds and repented for his former way of life and vowed to restore four times to all those whom he had wrongfully treated and to give to the poor, Jesus then responded with the revelation of His purpose in coming into the world which became the focal theme of Luke's Gospel.

There is much that we learn about Luke through the way in which this Gospel is written, and the language used within. We discover that Luke is a careful and exact historian as he states that he conducted extensive research to write a chronological account of Jesus. Though we do not have documented evidence of his educational background, it is apparent, through his writing and many Greek scholars who highly acknowledge his writing style and structure, that he had some formal training in Greek as well as the medicine of that day. Luke was a talented writer whose use of words was unique compared to other Gospel writers as he also used several medical terms along with theological terms.

Research has shown that an intentional discipleship process can become a valuable method of revitalizing ministries that will facilitate spiritual growth while increasing engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community. Lk 5:1-11 (NLT) is a classic example of this method:

One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. He noticed two empty boats at the

water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.' 'Master,' Simon replied, 'We worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, I'll let the nets down again.' And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, 'Oh, Lord, please leave me—I'm such a sinful man.' For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

This text reveals the new life that is found by persons who respond to the presence, call, and power of Jesus. That is to say that everyone whom Jesus encountered, whether it was in a moment of teaching and healing in a large crowd, in an intimate setting in a house during a meal, or in some of the most unique places of His ministry engagement, such as in a boat, when their faith was awakened and called upon to respond, their lives changed forever. As Luke's Gospel intentionally and strongly stresses Jesus' concern and care for all people and His availability to all people, including not only Jews, but even individuals that the Jewish society of that day greatly despised, such as Gentiles, sinners, the poor, women, and children, we find in His calling of the first disciples that not only is Jesus for everybody but the work of Jesus was for everybody who by faith would receive the invitation to engage in it. In these verses, Luke affirms, early on, Christ's purpose in ministry which He reaffirms later in the Gospel, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10) and that His purpose would be accomplished by any means necessary including the calling and empowering of the unlikely.

Both Mark and Matthew, in their perspective Gospels, record the account of Jesus walking along the Sea of Galilee and suddenly calling Simon, Andrew, James, and John to follow him (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20). However, only Luke tells the miraculous story of the overwhelming catch of fish that preceded the call to discipleship and served as a familiar visual illustration of what the work of discipleship was going to be. Luke's account of Jesus calling these first disciples is made unique among the synoptic Gospels.

Luke's characteristic attention to detail is seen as he paints the picture of what took place. He states, "One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God." (Lk 5:1) This shows that there was an intense thirst for the message that Jesus was proclaiming, so much so that as they are intently listening and so interested that they began to press closer toward Jesus. This image provides a reason as to why the calling of the disciples was so pertinent to the continued work of spreading the Gospel message. This moment of preaching to a large crowd was not a singular event in the ministry of Jesus, it was, in fact, among the first of many. While we know that Jesus in His hypostatic union of being fully human and yet fully divine could do and handle anything on His own, the following fishing demonstration that Luke includes in his account sets in place the mission perimeters for the disciples that the work is not meant to be done alone.

Lk 5:2-3 reintroduce us to Simon who, in Luke's Gospel, had his first encounter with Jesus in Lk 4:38-39, when Jesus was in Capernaum, a town in Galilee, teaching there in the synagogue every Sabbath. It reads, "After leaving the synagogue one day, Jesus went to Simon's home and discovered Simon's mother-in-law was very sick. Jesus was asked to heal her, and so He did." (Lk 5:2-3) This interaction between Simon and

Jesus that precedes the one that took place on the shore of Galilee gives some insight into the familiarity that Simon has with Jesus, and it helps to explain Simon's willingness to let Jesus use his fishing boat to serve as a seaside pulpit. No doubt, his having had encountered Jesus and the fact that just a few days prior he had witnessed the power of Jesus heal his mother-in-law played a role not just in his allowing Jesus the use of his boat but also in his obedience to the fishing instructions and his invitation to leave behind his established life and to embrace new life and follow him. This suggests then that familiarity, though it may not always exist in every context in which one seeks to develop relational discipleship, does help in the process of calling upon one's faith to be exercised in accepting and embracing a life of discipleship. In other words, the more encounters and experiences that one has with Jesus, the more encouraged they are to follow and serve Jesus.

Peter allowing Jesus to have space in the boat to teach the crowds and following the command of Jesus to push out from the shore, thus submitting to his leadership, also highlights something else about our individual journeys with Christ. It was not just space in the boat that Jesus commandeered, but it was space in Peter's life. It was space to allow Jesus to be seen in not just his boat, but in his life. It was space that allowed Jesus to be heard not just from his boat but from a very significant place in his life. For a fisherman in that day and time just as it is now, your boat is an extension of who you are, it's how you make a living, it is important to your survival and being able to provide for your family and yourself. It is a place where you are socially connected with others. And for the man of today, it is equivalent to your corner office at work, your spot on the team roster, the passenger seat in your police cruiser, the seat on the couch in your mancave,

the chair next to you at the barbershop. It is the spot standing around the grill with your neighbors, etc. It is there that, when we become disciples, we welcome Jesus into what is our own personal sacred space and allow Him to be seen and heard.

The following verses give us a brief look into the state of these men when Jesus encounters and calls them into discipleship. Lk 5:4-5 states:

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.’ ‘Master,’ Simon replied, ‘we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.

So, Jesus has entered Peter’s boat and requested space, and asked him to push away from shore so that he could address the crowd, and when He was finished, he requested even more from Peter, he asked Peter to get back to work. Peter’s response in paraphrase was “We are tired and discouraged.” They had been fishing all night unsuccessfully and had also been working from the early morning hours cleaning their nets. So, most likely behind Peter’s statement was the fact that he was exhausted and looking forward to going home and getting some sleep.

Most likely Peter is dealing with the fact that they have caught nothing and that just does not mean that they can’t eat fish, but that they can’t sell fish, and if they can’t sell fish then they can’t make any money, and that can potentially cause anyone to face some emotional and mental fatigue and frustration on top of the physical drain from casting, pulling, and cleaning nets. So, even though they are tired and discouraged, Jesus asked them to go out into the deeper water and try all over again. Nevertheless, Peter did what Jesus asked. We, like those early disciples, may not encounter Jesus and start our discipleship journey when we are well-rested and full of energy. It may not begin when we are sitting on top of the world and feeling as though we can accomplish anything, but this

exposes the reality that our call into discipleship may come when we are weary of the work and weight of our world and longing for a moment of rest, it may be when we are frustrated at failed attempts and false starts. Discipleship then, is not a call of the perfect, but a call to trust the Christ-led process of being perfected.

Although Luke does not go into detail about what Jesus taught the crowds that day, the real focal lesson of this encounter for any disciple comes from what happens after the seaside lesson. Jesus instructs Peter to go out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch and clearly Peter, who is a professional, sees this as a pointless exercise. Yet he agrees to do as instructed. Every fishing fact was ignored: it was daytime, they were in deep water, but fish were often caught at night closer to the shore. So, what is happening? Peter in his compliance shows how much he greatly respects Jesus, which led to his willingness to obey Jesus and ultimately to his being blessed by a miracle performed by Jesus. The lesson learned is that discipleship doesn't begin when we fully understand God and all that we are asked to do in following Jesus, rather it begins with our faith and willingness to trust Jesus.

Lk 5:6-7 states, "And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking." This is the first clue for those who seek to follow and serve Jesus; that though our individual calls into discipleship may be a unique experience, the work that we are called and assigned to engage in is meant to be accomplished in partnership with one another. This will later become a recurring theme in their disciple training and practices throughout their in-person walk with Christ and even afterward as they continue to spread His message when He is no longer physically with them.

What happens next is an overwhelming revelation for Peter and the others who have helped with this miraculous catch of fish. Lk 5:9-10 states that

When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, ‘Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.’ For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Peter responds by falling to his knees before Jesus, amazed by the power of God displayed in the abundant catch of fish. Peter at this moment is immediately aware of his sinfulness and unworthiness in the presence of such divine power and holiness. Peter’s expressed conviction reveals that he sees the great disparity between God’s power apparent in Jesus and his own earthly, compromised life. In other words, this confession indicates that Peter realized that Jesus was a holy man and that he himself was not. Peter’s confession of his sinfulness was essential, not only for his salvation but also for his becoming a disciple and servant of Jesus. Peter was expressing his own feeling of sin, guilt, shame, and unworthiness to be in the same boat with Jesus, let alone be involved in any kind of relationship with Him.

Theologian and New Testament scholar, Darrell L. Bock shares in his commentary on Luke, “What Peter does not realize is that admitting one’s inability and sin is the best prerequisite for service, since then one can depend on God. Peter’s confession becomes his résumé for service. Humility is the elevator to spiritual greatness.”<sup>4</sup> What Peter shows us is what all disciples must first humbly embrace and acknowledge: that we indeed do not deserve the presence of Christ in our lives and should receive the grace of His presence with great reverence and appreciation. What

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<sup>4</sup> Darrell L. Bock, “Luke” (London, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 100.

Christ teaches us throughout Peter's journey beyond this encounter is that so much of discipleship is about growing into who we are created and called to be through experiences that teach us about who God is and who we are in God.

Jesus' response to Peter in the final verses of the text is a moment of comfort for the present and a calling into a purpose for the future. "Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus." (Lk 5:10b-11) This biblical principle of calling into a purpose for the future will be incorporated into this project as it is an effective model that remains relevant for churches engaging and growing congregations via an intentional discipleship journey.

## **Conclusion**

I agree with Timothy Keller in his article entitled "The Call to Discipleship" as he insists that discipleship is a journey. Keller notes that

There are not two kinds of Christians: regular Christians and people who are really disciples. There's only one: to be a Christian is to be a disciple. To have anything to do with me is to follow me in the way I define it: setting a new priority, finding a new identity, experiencing living out of a new mercy. Second, having said that it's not an option—on the other hand, it is a journey.<sup>5</sup>

I also agree with Avery Rimiller regarding God calling us to be intentional when making disciples. Rimiller describes a 6-Step Discipleship Process to Spiritual Maturity as follows:

Discipleship is teaching and modeling what it looks like to follow Jesus and lead people into a relationship with Him. While there is no absolute formula for making perfect disciples, it's good to be intentional and seek God's will for how

<sup>5</sup> Timothy Keller, "The Call to Discipleship," <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/the-call-to-discipleship>.

He'd like to guide you in this process. What is a discipleship process? A discipleship process is a journey someone goes through to become more like Jesus. It is a process through which they learn more about God, His Word, and grow in spiritual maturity, and make more disciples. If you want to disciple someone, know that this is an amazing desire, and Jesus will be with you the whole way. In fact, Jesus modeled for us how to disciple others and lead them into a relationship with the Father.<sup>6</sup>

Rimiller provides these 6 steps from Jesus' example in the discipleship process:

1. Love Them – Before the foundation of the world, Jesus loved us and sent His sights on coming to save us and redeem us, all for relationship. Because He loved us first, we can now love others. This love should be the basis of all that we do, and from it comes the basis of discipling others. So, before you start discipling others, know that they are broken people too, people who may seem hard to love. But we are called to love them no matter what and ask Jesus to see people through His eyes. “Before the Passover Festival, Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” John 13:1 CSB

2. Show Them – When discipling others and leading them along in the discipleship process, we are called to point them to Jesus and help them live the life worthy of their calling. We should be walking the walk, not just talking the talk, and show them how to live according to God’s purposes. Just like Jesus, we are image-bearers of the Father and so when we are bringing people through the discipleship process let’s remember to show them who Jesus is and encourage them to imitate Him in everything. “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1 ESV

3. Teach Them – As Jesus went throughout His ministry, His disciples followed him in all of his preaching, teaching, and healing. Along the way, Jesus spoke many parables and taught large crowds about the word of God and about loving each other. Most times the disciples were confused about Jesus’ parables and teachings, so Jesus took the disciples aside by themselves and taught them about the word of God and what it meant. When we teach His word, it is like bringing out treasure new and old. This is why it’s important to teach disciples about the Bible in the process of discipleship. “Therefore,’ he said to them, ‘every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom treasures new and old.’”

Matthew 13:52 CSB

4. Correct Them – Once we have taught the word, we cannot expect everyone to get it correct 100% of the time. It’s ok if people make mistakes, but as we disciple others we should not be afraid to correct them in the process and point them back to Jesus. Even Jesus called Peter out for being worried about human concerns and not God’s concerns (Matthew 16:23). We are called to

<sup>6</sup> Avery Rimiller, “The 6-Step Discipleship Process to Spiritual Maturity,” <https://justdisciple.com/discipleship-process>.

correct people and call them higher, but not to our own standards, but to God's standards. This does not mean we can be harsh with people, but instead compassionate knowing that we are called righteous because of Jesus' righteousness, not our own. True disciples will accept His word and correction and repent if they have turned away. As we disciple these people, let's help them through this so that they may be complete and equipped for every good work. 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.' 2 Timothy 3:16-17 CSB

5. Equip Them – Whoever it is that you're leading through the discipleship process, know that they have incredible God-given gifts that can be used for the Kingdom of God. Help them develop these gifts and strengthen them so that they will be ready to make disciples of their own and serve the Body of Christ in their own unique way. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13 ESV

6. Send Them – As we are discipled, Jesus commissions us to go, and make disciples, telling all the nations about Him. That is what we are here for, the sending of disciples so that everyone may know, love, and worship the Father. The goal is multiplication, so as you make disciples and follow through on all the steps in this process, remember the end goal. Even if all you do is make one disciple, what could happen from that one person? They themselves could make two disciples and those two could make two more disciples, and so on. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

This is the goal, to see others grow in spiritual maturity and lead them into a relationship with Jesus, knowing that His love will multiply and transform the lives of people all over the world through an intentional discipleship process.<sup>7</sup>

This researcher believes this approach is biblical and will be demonstrated in this project. The model of Love will be lifted as not just an optional feature of discipleship, but a foundational one through the entire process. Without love for God and others, discipleship lacks the necessary motivating force and transformative power. Love will be promoted in various forms; love for God, love for others, love as modeled by Jesus, love

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<sup>7</sup> Avery Rimiller, "The 6-Step Discipleship Process to Spiritual Maturity," <https://justdisciple.com/discipleship-process>.

as a motivation to obedience, love as a fruit of the spirit, and love as the fuel to our witness and walk in the world.

The idea of showing or setting and living as an example of discipleship will be shared as this idea embodies certain characteristics of living that honors God. Genuinely living out these characteristics as a disciple can effectively set an example for others to follow. Such characteristics include, yet are not limited to, integrity, humility, servanthood, evangelism, perseverance, love, and a commitment to continual learning and growth.

Teaching who a disciple is and what discipleship is will involve sharing both biblical understanding and practical implications; biblical understanding by highlighting the spiritual transformation process of becoming a follower, learner, and student of Jesus. There will be a focus on committing to a relationship with Jesus that develops an understanding of one's spiritual mission and purpose. Then there is the practical application of discipleship which includes, yet is not limited to, daily devotions, serving others, lifelong learning, sacrificial living, obedience, and ultimately making disciples.

Growth through correction is an important process of discipleship. Embracing correction with humility, receptivity, and a commitment will aid the men as they become disciples to navigate the challenges and opportunities of life and ministry. Putting into practice the ideas of reflection, repentance, accountability, persistence, and developing the ability to view every life experience as a learning opportunity will help disciples develop, deepen their understanding of Scripture, cultivate their character, and mature in their faith.

Equipping disciples will be addressed by providing the men with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to grow in their relationship with God, to effectively share the gospel, and to make a positive impact in and on their community. Again, equipping through Biblical teaching and preaching, personal character development, practical training, engagement, and fellowship with the community in which they are called to serve, providing resources, encouragement, and empowerment are all needed in the phase of equipping. Another layer of equipping disciples comes in the form of providing evaluation and feedback that facilitates constructive growth opportunities.

As we ultimately prepare these men to be sent out into the world as disciples, we are following the model established by Jesus Christ, commissioning prepared individuals to go out and fulfill the Great Commission, which is to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19-20). It will be important to send them with all the support of the church which can take on many forms such as prayer, financial support, emotional support, spiritual support, and an intentional process for moments of rest and reflection. By sending the new disciples out in an equipped, thoughtful and supportive manner, we will be able to maximize their effectiveness in fulfilling the Great Commission and advance the kingdom of God.

Finally, this researcher further believes that this project model of developing and implementing an intentional discipleship process will have a profound impact on the revitalization of the Men's Ministry at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church and can be replicated in other churches to develop disciples, through teaching and fellowship, who actively serve their church and their communities.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

As churches have grown as influential beacons within communities, experiencing tremendous growth numerically when it comes to membership, the growth has failed to include an intentional discipleship process for persons to embrace and through which persons can journey. Though many churches facilitate an assimilation process for membership, the lack of a viable method of life-changing discipleship has resulted in visible consequences, especially with the men in the church. These consequences include persons falling into the margins of being a member, new members or believers being assimilated into church without being introduced to following Christ, persons lacking an understanding of what discipleship is and what it looks like in present times, persons failing to know how discipleship should impact one's life, and the church lacking persons being willing to step into leadership roles.

Inherently attached to the life of a disciple is the responsibility of helping others to begin their own unique spiritual journeys to experiencing and embracing a relationship with Christ, and ultimately committing to following and modeling their lives after Christ. A solution to this problem, as presented in this project, is the development and implementation of an intentional discipleship process, within the Men's Ministry, designed to reimagine and reenergize the perspective of discipleship. An effective discipleship process would involve the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church participating in an

intentional discipleship journey that would result in them experiencing spiritual growth and increasing their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community. The discipleship process would have goals as follows: (1) an increase in the number of men who participate in the Men's Ministry gathering, (2) an increase in the number of men involved in ministry outreach opportunities, and (3) an increase in the number of men who step up to assume leadership roles.

Shortform.com reflects on the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book entitled *The Cost of Discipleship* where Bonhoeffer presents a wake-up call for Christians: “Bonhoeffer expressed concern that by trying to make Christianity easier for people to practice, churches had, in fact, made it meaningless. As a remedy, he challenged Christians to adopt a rigorous lifestyle of discipleship, which involved self-denial, suffering, and renouncing your civil rights.”<sup>1</sup> This site reiterates the problem this way:

On the one hand, Bonhoeffer expresses concern that some churches turn people away from Christianity by making it seem too difficult with their rituals and dogma. Yet, on the other hand, he expresses concern that in trying to make Christianity easier, other churches have lost the truth about salvation. These churches give people a false sense of security, because they administer sacraments and assure people of their salvation without teaching them to be disciples of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

In this project, this researcher highlights the effectiveness of developing an intentional discipleship process to resolve this problem.

<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Cost of Discipleship,” <https://www.shortform.com/summary/the-cost-of-discipleship-summary-dietrich>.

<sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Cost of Discipleship,” <https://www.shortform.com/summary/the-cost-of-discipleship-summary-dietrich>.

In historical retrospect, a study of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) movement serves to support this project. According to the Salem Press Encyclopedia,

Although it consisted of only twelve members at its birth in London on June 6, 1844, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was destined to become a significant international organization. Within seven years, a YMCA was founded in Boston, Massachusetts. Today, the YMCA has millions of members throughout the United States and the world. Its sister organization, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), had its beginnings in England eleven years after the YMCA. The YWCA also has millions of members in the United States and throughout the world.<sup>3</sup>

This historical perspective of the initiation of a Bible study group for young men is therefore studied in this presentation of the founding of the YMCA; Evangelical purpose of the YMCA; YMCA focus on training and salvation; the establishment of the first YMCA for blacks; YMCA mission, vision, strong communities; and the modern-day YMCA. The historical foundation concludes with a discussion of the correlation between YMCA principles and Bible study classes and the intentional discipleship process approach with the aim of (1) sharing the word of God with and winning the souls of unsaved men for Christ and (2) focusing on teaching/training/growing Christian men into the disciples that Christ calls them to be.

### **The Founding of the YMCA**

Matthew Hill, in his article in study.com, gives an account of the founding of the YMCA, noting how "George Williams sought to create change, prompting him to

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<sup>3</sup> Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2020, 2.

develop the YMCA as a Christian Bible study group that fostered healthy ideals and provided a safe environment in contrast to street life.”<sup>4</sup>

Hill expressed how it was unique because it crossed social and economic boundaries by, within ten years of its founding, implementing a principle of inclusiveness in this account:

The YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) was founded by George Williams on June 6, 1844 in London and was destined for greatness as an international organization (Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2020). As a result of the Industrial Revolution many men migrated to newly developed areas that were not prepared to receive such an influx of people (Salem Press Encyclopedia, 2020). Williams was among the men who migrated, leaving his home at the age of 15. With a lack of constructive diversions or intellectual stimulation, many were drawn into gambling, pubs, and brothels causing Williams to be deeply disturbed by the lack of religion and create his own solution to the problem he foresaw. Williams started having prayer meetings and bible study with eleven of his friends (Campbell, 2020). Williams’ group began to grow when others from neighboring towns began to join the meetings. When people heard of his enthusiasm for prayer and bible study, many people joined the meetings which in turn encouraged the development of missionary and literary societies. Williams wanted to create a social network with men of all classes (Campbell, 2020).<sup>5</sup>

Hill notes how the YMCA was named:

With the support of his employer, George Hitchcock, Williams was able to use a larger gathering space for his meetings. A unanimous vote approved Williams’ desire to form a “Society for Improving the Spiritual Condition of Young Men engaged in the drapery and other trades,” making the society’s name Young Men’s Christian Association. The optimal space needed by the young society was a reading room where activities like discussions, lectures, prayer meetings, Bible study and personal counseling took place. Seven short years later 24 YMCAs were up and running across Great Britain. Then by 1854 there were 397 active YMCA’s in seven European countries embodied by over 30,350 men. Williams

<sup>4</sup> Matthew Hill, “YMCA History and Timeline,” <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ymca-history-timeline.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Hill, “YMCA History and Timeline,” <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ymca-history-timeline.html>.

essentially wanted to develop a healthy space for men in contrast with that of life on the street.”<sup>6</sup>

Hill expounded on how the first chapter of the YMCA was established and expanded in the United States as follows:

The good news of the work provided by the YMCA reached the United States which in turn caused Thomas V. Sullivan to gather 30 young men and established the first chapter for the United States in Boston, Massachusetts December 29, 1851. Sullivan was a maritime missionary and sea captain who lived for adventure. The program built in Boston was founded on the original principles set by George Williams in 1844. This American branch was established as a safe place for sailors to call a “home away from home”. By the late 1850’s the American YMCAs broadened their purpose to include additional classes like language, music and gymnastics. YMCA Branches were organized to serve special groups of young men. Youth hostels and residences were a priority to aid in meeting the needs of the railroad workers, members of the armed forces, college students, and other men seeking refuge. The need for physical and social recreation was valued and offered physical fitness activities like swimming and instruction on water safety. Today, the YMCA has over 10,000 locations in the United States.”<sup>7</sup>

### **Evangelical Purpose of the YMCA**

William Baker highlights the evangelical purpose of the YMCA in his book entitled *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* as follows:

For three years they functioned without formal organization, but in early June 1844, a dozen or so members of the group agreed to designate themselves the Young Men’s Christian Association. Their purpose, in the words of the minutes of their meeting, was to arouse converted men ‘to a sense of their obligation and responsibility as Christians in diffusing religious knowledge to those around them either through the medium of prayer meetings or any other meetings they think proper.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Hill, “YMCA History and Timeline,” <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ymca-history-timeline.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Hill, “YMCA History and Timeline,” <https://study.com/academy/lesson/ymca-history-timeline.html>.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 13-19.

Thus, from the outset the evangelical purpose of the YMCA was clear and firm, the methods flexible as expressed by Baker:

Too flexible for some. Most self-improvement societies of that day set up small libraries, or “reading rooms,” and sponsored lectures to propagate their views, but several members of the Y adamantly opposed those secular measures. One member, William Edwyn Shipton, railed for years against any dilution of the Y’s central function as a center of Bible study, prayer, and missionary work. Deeply suspicious of education, Shipton exhorted London Y leaders to “confine themselves entirely to those religious agencies which were peculiarly the work of the Association.” The YMCA, he insisted, should “seek to do first of all, last of all, and entirely, spiritual work” until all those sinners “now scattered up and down this naughty world” were brought into the fold. George Hitchcock agreed. Believing that one should pray before sitting down to read a book for divine guidance through the book’s erroneous parts, he wanted “as few secular things as possible” in the first YMCA buildings he helped furnish.<sup>9</sup>

Though flexibility in approaching evangelism and discipleship was not a favorite concept for everyone in the early days of the YMCA, it seems to have been an effective one that would stand the test of time. This researcher believes that the goal of both discipleship and the work of the YMCA find their parallel in that they are both meant to improve life by means of doing life not in the singular but in plurality. This, to this researcher, was the importance of the Y leaders coupling Bible Study, prayer, and the work of ministry with certain everyday activities of life. Though there were still some who felt that amusements should not be allowed as YMCA activities as noted by Baker:

If libraries and lectures were suspect to some early Y leaders, “mere amusements” were anathema to all. In November 1845, the first annual report of the London YMCA beckoned young men “to the library of useful knowledge, rather than to cards and billiards, the cigar divan and concert room, the theatre, and the seducing and polluting retreat.” The Y, after all, existed to keep young men off the “broad path” of city pleasures that led to destruction. To bring those worldly games and recreational activities into the YMCA parlor would risk ruin, or so the founders believed. Confronted with a proposal for a chess room in the Leamington branch

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<sup>9</sup> Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*, 47.

of the YMCA, W. E. Skipton in 1862 had the last word in this opening round of debate: “I do not think it is part of the Association’s work to provide any man with amusements.”<sup>10</sup>

This researcher finds it intriguing that some of the methods used to draw men away from certain ways of life and into a life of Christianity through the work of the YMCA in the early years are in some more modern ways employed today in the work of the church or Christian evangelism. What this means that there has always been and may possibly always be a difference of opinion in navigating the waters and answering the question what is or is not considered evangelism and discipleship when engaging these topics with the backdrop of tradition and time and trend. This principle is acknowledged by Baker as follows:

This negative attitude, common among the English founders of the YMCA, derived in part from a native Puritan tradition that included John Bunyan and seventeenth-century dissent, John Wesley and eighteenth-century Methodism, and Hannah More and early nineteenth-century evangelicalism—all fearful that frivolous pleasures and carnal allurements would damn the soul. More immediate inspiration came from abroad. English Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, and evangelical Anglicans (the prime sources of YMCA enthusiasm) all responded warmly to the intensely personal, evangelistic, and moralistic message of an American revivalist, Charles G. Finney. They devoured Finney’s Lectures to Professing Christians (1837) and Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1840). In 1849–1850 and again in 1858–1860, they eagerly welcomed his evangelistic crusades to the British Isles.<sup>11</sup>

### **YMCA Focus on Training and Salvation**

The YMCA takes pride in its historical focus on training young men and leading them to salvation. William Murray, in his book entitled *Principles and Organization of*

<sup>10</sup> Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*, 47.

*the Young Men's Christian Association*, discussed the YMCA's focus on striving to do two mutually helpful things. One of these activities was:

To train Christian young men in Christian service: The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men, who, regarding Jesus Christ as their Savior' etc. This leaves no doubt of the motive of the Young Men's Christian Associations—to take the scattered forces of Christian young men in a community and bind them together in a united effort, thereby greatly multiplying their power. "One shall chase a thousand; and two shall put ten thousand to flight. Desire to be His disciples. Disciple means learner or scholar. It is significant that this word should have been used in speaking of Christian young men. It means that those who are to be trained for service are those who, being Christians, desire to go further and to study under the greatest Teacher, Jesus Christ Himself. And the words which follow are equally significant "Desire to be His disciples (scholars) in their doctrine and in their life/' Here we have the two sides of a man: what he knows—his doctrine; what he is—his life.<sup>12</sup>

The second helpful YMCA activity that Murray noted is

To save non-Christian young men: "And to associate their efforts for the extension of His kingdom." This statement in the Basis makes plain a fact which ought not to need any special emphasis, namely, that the primary purpose of the Christian young men who are brought together in the Association is not the securing of some benefit to themselves, be it educational, physical, or whatnot. We are "saved to serve." One of the characteristics which distinguish the Association from the mere social club lies just here: men join the latter for what they can get, the former for what they can give.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Establishment of the First YMCA for Blacks**

The YMCA of Metropolitan Washington 2022 provides this reflection on the establishment of the first YMCA for blacks:

Anthony Bowen was a former slave. Bowden was introduced to the YMCA by a friend but was disappointed that black men were barred from membership. As the first African American to work for the U.S Patent Office, Bowen was introduced to the YMCA by a friend enjoying its inclusivity but was disappointed that black men were prohibited from establishing a membership. To remedy this disputed response, Anthony Bowen, in 1953, opened a YMCA that catered to African-

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<sup>12</sup> William D. Murray, *Principles and Organization of the Young Men's Christian Association* (New York, NY: Young Men's Christian Association Press, 1910), 28.

<sup>13</sup> Murray, *Principles and Organization of the Young Men's Christian Association*, 33.

Americans, establishing the first YMCA for blacks in the world, in the City of Washington. This establishment was known as the YMCA for Colored Men and Boys. Bowen's commitment to advancing the social, educational, and religious facet for African-Americans was his drive for establishing a branch for blacks to have a safe environment.<sup>14</sup>

In blackhistoryedzone.com, author, Kathy, further expounds on Anthony Bowen as follows:

Bowen was born into slavery in Prince George's County, Maryland in 1809. Though enslaved, he found the opportunity to work off the farm. He saved the money he earned and purchased his freedom. He continued working and saving until he was able to purchase his wife's freedom as well. When both were free they moved to Washington, DC. When a whites-only YMCA opened in Washington, Bowen decided to form one for Black men. Bowen was a leader in his community. He worked to establish churches and places where Black people could get together for fun and where they could be educated. In 1853, he founded the first Colored Men's Christian Association. Bowen served as the organization's first president. The colored YMCA became an important part of the Black community. Its meeting rooms were used by major organizations such as the NAACP and the Negro Medical Aid Society. It was also used to house students attending historically Black Howard University. Many well-known African Americans, including Langston Hughes and Thurgood Marshall, spent time there. Through the years there have been many changes and improvements to the Y. It has changed locations several times. Yet, the Anthony Bowen YMCA it is still serving the community. It is now part of the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington.<sup>15</sup>

An article in the Washington Post gives this account of the impact of the YMCA on the community:

When the Anthony Bowen YMCA opened 20 years ago at 1325 W St. NW, it was surrounded by drug dealers and crime scenes. Now, a modern Y will be built for the revitalized U Street corridor, which has been transformed from its blighted past into a hub of commercial and residential activity. Perseus Realty and YMCA of Metropolitan Washington broke ground Friday at 14<sup>th</sup> and W streets NW for a \$97 million mixed-use project that will include 231 one- and two-bedroom apartment units, 12,200 square feet of street-level retail space and a 46,000-square-foot YMCA facility. The development will rise on the site of the old

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<sup>14</sup> YMCA of Metropolitan Washington 2022, "History of YMCA Anthony Bowen," <https://www.ymcadc.org/history-of-ymca-anthony-bowen/>.

<sup>15</sup> Kathy, "Black History Zone, Black History for Young Learners, Anthony Bowen," <https://www.blackhistoryedzone.com/blog/black-ymca/>.

YMCA. Perseus Realty and the youth organization agreed to a deal in which the developer would tear down the old building and incorporate a YMCA as part of the new one. Perseus Realty will own the apartment and retail portions of the project; the YMCA will retain ownership of its facility.<sup>16</sup>

The Washington Post article further recounted the new day for the neighborhood as follows:

Officials said the building heralds a new day for the neighborhood. “We’ve come a mighty long way,” said Angie L. Reese-Hawkins, president and chief executive of YMCA of Metropolitan Washington. “We’ve replaced the fear and distress with families and people who are committed and care about their community.” The YMCA facility will have child-care rooms, offices, a wellness center, an Internet cafe, an interactive museum, a rooftop terrace and a 25-meter indoor swimming pool with locker rooms. “Having a new, state-of-the-art community center for young people to go to in this neighborhood is going to be a great thing for generations to come,” Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) said at the groundbreaking. “You can never have too many positive programs for young people, and this is an exceptionally positive one.” D.C. Council member Jim Graham said the project got off to a good start when the developers incorporated the community’s ideas on the project. “I think on this project, all of the stars were aligned,” Graham (D-Ward 1) said. “Everybody who is a stakeholder in this project did the right thing from the beginning.<sup>17</sup>

The Washington Post article expounded on the YMCA founding, locations, services, and programs as follows:

Anthony Bowen, a former slave who had purchased his freedom, moved to the District in 1853 and founded the first YMCA for blacks in the United States. In 1912, the Twelfth Street YMCA, known as the Colored YMCA, opened its doors. It closed 70 years later when the building had become structurally unsound. The branch reopened in 1988 at its W Street location; the former site was redeveloped and became the Thurgood Marshall Center for Service and Heritage in 1999. During construction, child-care services at the Bowen branch will be moved to Mount Airy Baptist Church, 1100 North Capitol St. NW. Senior programs will be moved to the Thurgood Marshall Center. The project is expected to be completed by December 2010. “Buildings house us, but they don’t define us,” Reese-

<sup>16</sup> The Washington Post, YMCA to Rise Where Crime Once Ruled, October 2, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> The Washington Post, YMCA to Rise Where Crime Once Ruled, October 2, 2008.

Hawkins said. "It's what we do with those buildings that really fundamentally make a difference in our communities.<sup>18</sup>

The Washington Post later chronicled the journey of the Anthony Bowen YMCA to its permanent home:

Religious leader and educator Anthony Bowen founded the first African American YMCA in 1853, but it took decades for the organization to secure a permanent home. President Theodore Roosevelt laid a cornerstone for what was originally called the 12<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA, which opened in 1912. The structure still stands at 1816 12<sup>th</sup> St. NW. The Italian Renaissance-style building, designed by Booker T. Washington's son-in-law, served as black Washington's community center for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was where Langston Hughes wrote poetry, Thurgood Marshall designed legal strategies and John Thompson Jr. — who became Georgetown University's basketball coach — shot hoops. It was renamed for Bowen in 1973. By 1982, however, the pillar of the community was crumbling. The YMCA boarded up the building and decamped to its current location a few blocks away, which would open six years later. Neighbors determined to restore the original property banded together, according to Thomasina Yearwood, executive director of the Thurgood Marshall Center, which currently operates the space. In addition to housing 11 nonprofits, the national historic landmark also serves as a museum dedicated to the groundbreaking YMCA branch. There are photos of children playing pool, reading and learning woodworking in the Y's heyday. One of the original dorm rooms has been preserved and furnished to look the way it did before 1950. The gymnasium still provides a place for fitness activities. "It's so special to walk into this building each day," says Yearwood, who strives to maintain the Bowen legacy by continuing to serve the needs of the Shaw community. The center is seeking funding for a healthful-lifestyles program for kids focused on activity and nutrition.<sup>19</sup>

This researcher was pleased to find out that visitors are welcome to examine the exhibits for free during the center's business hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m.-3 p.m. More information is available at [www.thurgoodmarshallcenter.org](http://www.thurgoodmarshallcenter.org).

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<sup>18</sup> The Washington Post, YMCA to Rise Where Crime Once Ruled, October 2, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> The Washington Post, YMCA Anthony Bowen's long history in DC, September 4, 2013.

## **YMCA Mission, Vision, Strong Communities**

The YMCA mission, vision, and commitment to building strong communities is noted in [ymca.org](http://ymca.org):

**Mission:** The Y has grown exponentially over the span of our rich history, but our mission of putting Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all has remained constant.

**Vision:** Our vision continues to evolve as we strive to increase our impact in youth development, healthy living and social responsibility in the U.S. and across the globe.

**Strong Communities:** For more than 170+ years, the Y has been building spirit, mind and body for all. We know that strong people build strong communities – because we are all better together.<sup>20</sup>

## **The Modern-Day YMCA**

Ancestralfindings.com describes the modern-day YMCA as follows:

Going into the twenty-first century, the Fourteenth World Council of YMCAs also called on each member of YMCA to focus on certain challenges that are to be prioritized according to each individual group. It also commands each member YMCA to operate by a set of principles, which are a slight evolution of the earlier Kampala Principles. These principles are:

- Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and striving for spiritual, intellectual and physical well-being of individuals and wholeness of communities.
- Empowering all to take increased responsibilities and assume leadership at all levels and working towards an equitable society.
- Advocating for and promoting the rights of and upholding the rights of children.
- Fostering dialogue and partnership between people of different faiths and ideologies and recognizing the cultural identities of people and promoting cultural renewal.
- Committing to work in solidarity with the poor, dispossessed, uprooted people and oppressed racial, religious and ethnic minorities.
- Seeking to be mediators and reconciles in situations of conflict and working for meaningful participation and advancement of people for their own self-determination.

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<sup>20</sup> The YMCA, “Our History,” <https://www.ymca.org/who-we-are/our-history>.

- Defending God's creation against all that would destroy it and preserving and protecting the earth's resources for coming generations. To face these challenges, YMCA will develop patterns of co-operation at all levels that enable self-sustenance and self-determination.<sup>21</sup>

Ancestralfindings.com article concluded on how the YMCA came to be known simply as the Y: "In July of 2010, the YMCA of the USA rebranded itself to simply be called by its popular nickname, "The Y." Today, all of the YMCA groups around the globe are open to everyone, regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, culture, or socioeconomic background."<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The correlation between YMCA principles and Bible study classes and the intentional discipleship process approach to help men to mature in their spiritual growth to become disciples of Jesus Christ can be summed up in the words of Shyann Swearingen in her article called "Just Disciple" as she gives this description of a disciple and definition of discipleship training:

A disciple is someone who is following Christ and pursuing growth in all aspects of their faith. We're all called to go and make disciples, but how does one make disciples? You have to learn how to raise up other disciples and can do this by training them. What is discipleship training? Discipleship training is leading others through the process of becoming a disciple for Christ. As the trainer, you live life with your fellow brother or sister in Christ. You point them to Christ in every situation and help them grow in their walk through fellowship.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> American History, "The Creation and History of the YMCA," <https://ancestralfindings.com/the-creation-and-history-of-the-ymca/>.

<sup>22</sup> American History, "The Creation and History of the YMCA," <https://ancestralfindings.com/the-creation-and-history-of-the-ymca/>.

<sup>23</sup> Shyann Swearingen, "Just Disciple," <https://justdisciple.com/discipleship-training-program/>.

As this project serves as a model for revitalizing Men's Ministry as illustrated in the YMCA movement, this researcher notes the significance of evaluating the effectiveness of this project and including various forums in the discipleship process. Lifeway Young Adults provided the best evaluation of the YMCA discipleship process in an article entitled "YMCA—A Better Picture of Discipleship?" as follows:

I'm sitting in the 'Coffee Nook' of the local YMCA like I do every Friday night. We arrive at about 5 p.m., and after my eldest son runs off to his soccer practice, and I get my other two kids to their respective childcare spots, I usually grab a cup of Java and find a comfortable place in this 'kids free zone' haven they have carved out near the lobby. I plug my headphones in, throw my iTunes Party Shuffle on, and settle in to spend some quiet time preparing for our Sunday morning up/rooted teaching times.

Tonight as I was paused for a minute (trying to get someone who had a clue to let me know if their WiFi was working), I took notice around me at something that I hadn't really paid much attention to before: all around me passed people of various ethnicities and ages—all here for different reasons. For some, the Y holds a place where they can unwind after a long day's work. For others, it is a place to meet up with friends for a game of racquetball or basketball. Some come to pursue greater health in their lives. Still others hang out at the soccer fields or around the pool—visiting with friends and acquaintances they will likely not see apart from this weekly practice pilgrimage. Others come, like me, to find a quiet spot to enjoy a semi-decent cup of flavored coffee and read a book, the day's news, or tie-up some loose ends for work.

I think the reason all of this struck me in particular tonight of all nights is that it dawned on me how diverse the YMCA is compared with the church where I gather each week to worship with my fellow spiritual travelers. The similarities are many...

- Different people come for different reasons, each looking for fulfillment of some individual wish/desire in their lives.
- They have "joined" together at a place that is there to provide balance in their lives. (Although it might be argued that the Y does one better than the church in approaching spirituality in a holistic way—married with the physical, emotional, and mental parts of our being.)
- Some come once a week, others are involved in much greater detail, from several times a week, to daily, and more.

It's a warming thought to me, for some reason. I think the Y has it right (not that I'm arguing that we should all just skip our weekly worship times and head to the Y together for a workout). They understand that although the "picture" is the same for all—a balance in all aspects of who we are—how that is accomplished is different for each person. Should everyone be told, "If you really want to be healthy, you'll join that step aerobics class. It worked for me, after all!"? What if

everyone who stepped through the doors here were given a “guide” to ideal health, complete with appropriate steps to take (in sequential order, of course)? Start with learning to use the cardio equipment. Then, move on to the weights. Once you become really focused, you should step into one of the “Step Aerobics” groups. Then pick racquetball, swimming, or another activity for those who are more “dedicated” to their growth. And then, when you’ve really arrived, you should start a Pilates class you can lead yourself.

I think if they did these things we would begin to see the membership numbers dwindling and Y’s beginning to close their doors before long.

I think it is essential for churches to understand that the “one-size-fits-all” view of discipleship is not only unrealistic, but possibly unhealthy. People are at different points and they don’t always fit a certain step (or baseball “base”). For some they need to join on the large level with other worshippers—finding a place to lay their cares, worries, and agendas aside to focus on He who desires our focus. Some need their knowledge base of who God is in their lives expanded—although that might come as much from connecting one-on-one with another Christian in an informal environment, swapping spiritual stories, as from a discipleship class, or Sunday School or home group.

We need to put the Christian cookie-cutter back in the drawer and begin to learn how to create beautiful delicacies from the ingredients that are provided to us—on a person-by-person basis. Yes, it’s more difficult to help others in this way, but once we do, I believe we’ll begin to see people walking out of the church doors healthier than when they walked in.<sup>24</sup>

The Hastings Family YMCA actively encourages community bible study through this appeal:

Join us as we learn about God’s word! At the YMCA we value our Christian principles and we strive to teach families about the Bible. The Bible studies lead at the YMCA are put together to strengthen your relationship with God and fellowship with others. No matter where you are at in life, everyone is welcome to the studies!<sup>25</sup>

In taking time to visit and interact with the modern-day local YMCA, this researcher discovered, while the YMCA’s approach to discipleship is no longer explicitly religious, it does still play a role in promoting personal growth, community engagement, and values consistent with Christian teachings. Much like an intentional discipleship

<sup>24</sup> Lifeway Young Adults, “YMCA--A Better Picture of Discipleship?” <https://youngadults.lifeway.com/2009/04/ymca-a-better-picture-of-discipleship/>.

<sup>25</sup> Hastings Family YMCA, “Bible Studies,” <https://www.hastingsymca.net/bible-studies/>.

process would strive to do, through its programs and services, the YMCA continues to support individuals in their journey toward holistic well-being and positive social change by strengthening the body, mind, soul.

While the contemporary YMCA's focus has expanded and evolved over time, it still retains aspects of discipleship within its programs and values, again, though perhaps not explicitly in a religious sense. Both the YMCA and Christian Discipleship, emphasize positive character development by teaching and living out similar traits such as honesty, responsibility, respect, and service, which align with principles of discipleship found in Christian teachings. They also strive to foster positive and impactful community relations by providing opportunities for individuals to build relationships and support one another in their personal growth and development. The YMCA also continues to uphold values that are consistent with Christian teachings, such as caring for others, serving the community, and promoting social justice.

Leadership development is another area where the two parallel in their existence, opportunities that help individuals develop skills in communication, teamwork, and decision-making, which are important aspects of discipleship and Christian service are found both in the process of discipleship and in the programming of the YMCA. The YMCA provides diverse opportunities for individuals to develop their leadership potential, regardless of age, race, background, or experience level. Whether through youth programs, camps, volunteer opportunities, or professional development initiatives, the YMCA empowers people to become effective leaders who can contribute to positive change in their communities and beyond. Similarly, the intent of this project is to teach Christian discipleship in such a way that the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church

will develop leadership skills that can be demonstrated in the church and in the community.

The YMCA has two other major areas in which they still resemble and, in many ways, parallel the Christian principals of discipleship; One being Inclusivity and Diversity and the other being Role Modeling and Mentoring. Regarding inclusivity and diversity, the YMCA welcomes individuals from all backgrounds, regardless of religious affiliation, race, or gender, and proudly promotes inclusivity and diversity within its programs, activities, and services. Much like discipleship and the practical work of disciples, evangelism, there is an open and welcome invitation to all who wish to enter and be a part. This is a necessary way of thinking when creating a community where individuals feel a strong sense of belonging and requires intentional action.

When it comes to Role Modeling and Mentoring, it is the YMCA staff and volunteers who often serve members and program participants in this capacity, guiding them in their personal growth and development and demonstrating values consistent with discipleship principles. This kind of mentorship much like spiritual mentorship is more than just a guiding hand on a person's shoulder; it is an investment in the future of our communities, and for disciples more specifically, faith communities. By sharing wisdom, experiences, and insights, mentors help illuminate the path towards spiritual growth and maturity. It is this researcher's belief that at the heart of every successful mentorship is a relationship built on trust and respect, evident in the YMCA practice of nurturing bonds between mentors and mentees that extend beyond the walls of their facilities. This is also evidenced by the YMCA's approach, which is grounded in authenticity and genuine concern for the individual's journey.

Time spent visiting and interacting with the modern-day local YMCA proved to be extremely beneficial and helped this researcher see a clear and direct connection between the YMCA and Discipleship.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

For the purposes of this section of research, discipleship will be our focus. This study points to the theological significance of establishing an intentional discipleship process in the church. This discipleship process has the potential to revitalize the Men's Ministry, allowing men to experience spiritual growth and increase their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

In many churches and faith communities, there has been for years an ever-growing gap between distinguishing discipleship and membership. The gap has gone unnoticed often because of the rising number of faith leaders who have become in some ways only counters of sheep instead of shepherds of sheep. This means that we have become more enamored with the number of people that fill our buildings and sanctuaries instead of being concerned with providing spiritual guidance, preaching, and teaching that would ignite a fire within the people that would fill them with a spirit willing to share their gifts in the work of the kingdom. We have been satisfied with seeing people come but have failed to promote seeing people change. We are greatly excited and even intentional when it comes to planning and preparing for numerical and membership growth. We have done well at implementing well-thought-out assimilation plans, new member pep rallies, welcome to our culture parties, and "this is how you become one of

us" orientation courses. But we have missed the mark when it comes to fulfilling the God-ordained mission of the church which is to be the place where one can find how they can spiritually grow to follow and be like Jesus through genuine and intentional discipleship. The goal of Christ's church was never to be satisfied with great worship attendance on Sunday mornings, but it was to spread the Gospel message that God wanted to be part of our lives daily and partner with us daily so that we could ultimately be our best selves and that we would give the best of ourselves in sacrificial service to our loving God.

Because of this slow, unintentional, yet impactful diversion from the original aim of Christian discipleship, churches have seen a decline in active persons who fully embrace the mission of the church and a surge in those who are not adequately equipped to fulfill their individual call to further the work of discipleship by way of evangelism. This has caused those who are active in ministry work to suffer from burnout because of the lack of new disciples to take up the slack. If this trend continues, and there grows a lack of outreach from the church due to a lack of willing workers, it could also lead to an increased negative view from the community where churches are called to serve to be seen as a Sunday morning only institution that has no connection with, compassion for, or call to be a place of refuge, strength, and encouragement as the church has always been.

Taking an honest assessment of our successes and shortcomings as a ministry reveals that The Loudon Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or LACC, is not exempt from the reality that there is a deficit when it comes to having an actual detailed strategic plan and approach to effective discipleship. While the church is what some would consider a thriving congregation with many positive aspects of ministry that

function well and meet the needs of persons who are both believers within the church and those who are nonbelievers but still considered a part of our family through the community, the Disciple Men's Fellowship Ministry is an area of focus that has suffered from a lack of an intentional discipleship focus and plan.

To effectively develop and implement such a plan that aims at encouraging men to embark on a spiritual transformative journey of self-denial, self-discovery, and self-development and leads to genuine discipleship there must be an identified concrete understanding of what true discipleship looks like. This understanding of discipleship should not only be known by the leadership of the church but must be shared and embraced amongst the entire community of disciples to ensure that as disciples are developed, supported, and encouraged, they also feel equipped to carry out the mandate given by Jesus Christ to continue to make disciples who will then contribute to increasing not only the numerical growth of the church through membership but also the spiritual growth and impact of the church through effective discipleship.

Author Bill Hull, whose works generally focus on discipleship and church leadership says that "Discipleship occurs when someone answers the call to learn from Jesus and others how to live his or her life as though Jesus were living it. As a result, the disciple becomes the kind of person who naturally does what Jesus did."<sup>1</sup> There is no other way to learn from Christ's life than to examine not only how Jesus lived, but also how He encouraged His early disciples to live as they followed Him. The thought that Hull lifts supports this researcher's earlier claims that there is a necessary pivot that must

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Hull, "Why We Need a Theology of Discipleship," <https://thebonhoefferproject.com/weeklycolumn/2016/11/16/why-we-need-a-theology-of-discipleship-1>.

take place in our church and many churches away from a call to and for membership and back to the original agenda of Christ of calling persons to believe and then into embracing discipleship.

This section includes a focused look at the theology of discipleship. “The Bonhoeffer Project” raised this question: What qualifies as a theology of discipleship in the first place? Here is the answer noted:

First, it must address the relationship between discipleship and salvation. Present day evangelicalism gives little place to discipleship in its view of salvation. Our doctrines of grace tend to keep us from clearly defining what it means to be a disciple. We tend to treat the experience of conversion as something entirely separate from the process of becoming a disciple. This separation has led to a common problem we face today. People profess to be Christians yet believe that they do not need to follow Jesus. We’ve defined discipleship as optional, a choice and not a demand. (John Stott characterized the gospel as being both a “gift and demand.”) For many who call themselves Christians today, being saved or being a Christian has no serious connection with an ongoing commitment to being formed into the image of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion of this section summarizes a Christological model of discipling men for their personal spiritual growth and their discovering and embracing the call to their place in the work of God’s kingdom.

## **Discipleship**

The church is meant to be a place where a community of disciples can grow individually and together as we are trained to become effective bearers and sharers of the gospel message about Jesus Christ. We are not called to be like one another, but we are called to find our unique individuality as we strive to be more like Jesus. We find within

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<sup>2</sup> The Bonhoeffer Project, “What Qualifies As A Theology of Discipleship,” <https://thebonhoefferproject.com/weeklycolumn/2018/2/23/what-qualifies-as-a-theology-of-discipleship>.

the Bible several examples of how our relational journey as disciples will be different from one another.

Theologian, Avery Cardinal Dulles in his book, entitled *Models of The Church*, says,

Even within the community of disciples there were degrees of intimacy. An outer circle comprised a relatively large number of men and women, among whom we can identify Cleopas and his unnamed companion (Lk. 24:18), Joseph of Arimathea (Jn. 19:38), and Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias (Acts 1:23). The reader of Luke 10:1-16 is evidently intended to understand that the seventy-two sent on mission are disciples. The Gospels tell us also of a number of women, such as Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Susanna, and Salome, who followed Jesus and supported him with their possessions. Finally, we read in the first chapter of Acts of a band of some 120 persons gathered with Mary the Mother of Jesus, Peter, and the Eleven in the upper room in Jerusalem. In view of all these indications, it would be a mistake to underestimate the total number of disciples. The Twelve, however, constituted an inner core of individuals personally chosen and commissioned by Jesus for a very important task. Even among the Twelve there was a nucleus consisting of the two pairs of brothers, Peter and Andrew, and James and John.<sup>3</sup>

At the Loudon Avenue Christian Church, the Men's Ministry would serve as this modeled inner core of individuals personally chosen and commissioned to be disciples and then to make disciples.

The LACC Men's Ministry, through an intentional discipleship process, would embody the essence of a community of disciples as described here by Dulles:

The community of the disciples, with its exceptional style of life, was intended to attract attention, like a city set upon a mountaintop or a lantern in a dark place. It had a mission to remind the rest of the people of the transcendent value of the Kingdom of God, to which the disciples bore witness. It was therefore important for them to adopt a manner of life that would make no sense apart from their intense personal faith in God's providence and his fidelity to his promises.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Avery C. Dulles, *Models of The Church Expanded Edition* (Broadway, NY: Doubleday, 2002), 199-200.

<sup>4</sup> Dulles, *Models of The Church Expanded Edition*, 200-201.

Author Dennis M. Sweetland, in his work entitled *Our Journey with Jesus*, gave these accounts of Discipleship According to Luke-Acts:

Jesus associates with sinners and other outcasts. When Luke records Peter's comment, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk 5:8), he is pointing out Peter's sense of unworthiness and fear in the presence of the one who has worked such a tremendous miracle. While Jesus' words of comfort, "Do not be afraid" (5:10), may function as a declaration of forgiveness in the present context, 10 the more important fact is that Jesus calls a confessed sinner to follow him. Far from being an impediment to discipleship, this recognition of sinfulness is a necessary prerequisite.

The call to discipleship includes a missionary responsibility. By the end of this pericope it is clear that discipleship involves following Jesus on his way and that during the course of this following Jesus' disciples will save other human beings as they too become his disciples. This missionary motif occurs explicitly later in the Gospel when Jesus, as the risen Lord, says to his disciples, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things" (Lk 24:47-48).

This first call/commissioning story thus provides the initial perspective on the key elements of discipleship according to Luke. Individuals are presented as "following" Jesus only after they have heard his words and observed his powerful deeds.

This journey motif suggests that Christian discipleship is dynamic, not static. More than mere physical accompaniment is involved, however, as traveling "with" Jesus means intimate personal attachment to the person of Jesus. Recognition of one's own sinfulness does not preclude this personal attachment; such an awareness is not an impediment, but rather a prerequisite for discipleship. The one who joins Jesus on his journey also incurs a missionary responsibility, must adopt a radical stance toward possessions, and must be aware that there is a communal dimension to discipleship.

While we recognize that "Luke does not just build his Christology on Jesus" titles," the fact is that he does use these titles throughout the Gospel and Acts to identify Jesus. One must not concentrate on these titles in the abstract, of course, but rather pay close attention to how they are used in Luke-Acts and how they affect Luke's understanding of discipleship.

Luke presents Jesus as the risen Lord who rules from heaven and as a human being whose story is normative for Christian discipleship.<sup>5</sup>

## Theology of Discipleship

In his writing entitled *New Testament Theology — The Theology of The Gospel of Luke*, author Joel B. Green points out that in the broadest sense, discipleship is possible at all because of the gracious intervention of God in human affairs. Green further expounds on the call of discipleship as follows:

More narrowly, Luke portrays Jesus as going to people and calling them to join him discipleship (5:1-11, 27; 9:59; 18:22). Compared to the portrayal of disciple-calling in the Gospel of Mark, Luke's understanding is less spectacular. In Mark, Jesus issues his command, "Follow me!", without warning, with no previous interaction. Luke, on the other hand, locates the call to discipleship more fully in the context of Jesus' ongoing mission in an area. It is after having already healed Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39) and instructing Simon in his vocation as a fisherman that Jesus heralds Simon's change of vocation: "From now on you will be catching people!" (5:1-11).<sup>6</sup>

Green goes on to discuss how Jesus defines discipleship:

Jesus defines discipleship as following him (9:23), a concept Luke develops above all by noting the presence of the disciples continually "with" Jesus (6:17; 7:11; 8:1, 22; 9:10; 22:11, 14, 28, 39; cf. 8:38; 22:33). This may seem a rather vague and passive role, this "being with Jesus," but in Acts it becomes one of the key credentials for the apostolic office (Acts 1:21). Being with Jesus suggests companionship with Jesus, sharing in his success and failure, his acceptance and rejection; it entails identifying with and being shaped by Jesus' own life and mission. In Luke 9:43, following Jesus is understood in the context of self-denial and daily cross-bearing. On the one hand, Luke seems to have in mind some form of impending persecution of Jesus' followers — hence, the emphasis on public denial of oneself rather than of one's faith in Jesus (cf. 9:24-26; 12:8-12)." Being "with" Jesus eventually entails sharing in his missionary agenda. Although the Twelve receive no explicit assignment when they are chosen to be apostles (6:12-

<sup>5</sup> Dennis M. Sweetland, *Our Journey with Jesus, Discipleship According to Luke-Acts* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 22, 23, 25, 86, 87.

<sup>6</sup> Joel B. Green, *New Testament Theology - The Theology of The Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 106.

16), they are later sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal (9:1-2; cf. 10:1-11). In this way they begin to fulfill what was anticipated in the case of Simon and his fishing partners — “From now on you will be catching people.<sup>7</sup>

## Christology

Through the process of using an intentional model for discipleship, the goal for the men of The Loudon Avenue Christian Church is to understand the teachings of Christ as it relates to their own salvation, sanctification, and justification. And by seeing the change that occurs in their individual lives they will grow to understand the importance of spreading the Gospel of Christ to make an impact on the world. The discipleship process is no simple undertaking, The first men that Jesus called into discipleship journeyed with him for three years to understand who Christ was and what He was teaching them so that they would ultimately be commissioned to teach others. They had the benefit of physically walking with, seeing, and sitting with Jesus to learn directly from Him. We who endeavor to be, teach, and develop disciples since that day must have a firm understanding of not only who Jesus was then and is to us today, but also how Jesus did what He did. How did he take these ordinary men and lead them on a spiritually transformative experience? In order to develop an effective model for developing disciples of Christ, we must begin with the original model, which is Christ. Therefore, the theological lens through which we must approach developing and implementing this model is the lens of Christology. It is necessary for one to know from a Biblical perspective who Jesus Christ is in order to teach someone else about Jesus.

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<sup>7</sup> Green, *New Testament Theology - The Theology of The Gospel of Luke*, 108-109.

The meaning of Christology is often simplified to being the study of Jesus Christ, specifically who He was and/or is and what He did and/or does. In his book entitled *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, author John Macquarrie suggests that “...Christology is more than a historical study of the man Jesus of Nazareth. It is also (and even primarily, a theological study), putting Jesus in the context of Christian faith, asking about his relation to God on the one hand and to the human race on the other, and asking how we must think of a person who can sustain these relations.”<sup>8</sup>

The thought expounded here is that Christology doesn’t merely tell us the historical details of Jesus’ identity and work in Biblical times, but more importantly for the present-day believer and disciple, it encourages us to see the life of Christ as a model for us to imitate in our present context of living out of Faith daily. And more specifically, for the purposes of teaching and developing new disciples, one must view Christ as the original “source material” to be pulled upon and carefully examined for an effective discipleship process to be created. This researcher remembers being a pre-teen and a teen in the 90s when a popular and purposeful trend amongst Christian youth, worldwide, was to wear a bracelet bearing the initials WWJD, which stood for “What Would Jesus Do?”. The bracelets were the idea of the youth group leader at Calvary Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. The goal of the phrase was to help teenagers remember to ask this question whenever faced with life decisions and more importantly to embrace the character of Jesus, and the teachings of their Christ to be encouraged to live out their faith more seriously in their daily lives. When it comes to creating and implementing models for Christian discipleship, we must certainly ask the questions, What Would Jesus Do?

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<sup>8</sup>John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London, UK: SCM Press, 1990), 5.

and more specifically What did Jesus Do? and How? Viewing discipleship through a Christological lens helps us to answer those questions. We gain through this lens a better understanding of how Christ impacts our lives as followers by seeing how the lives of earlier disciples were impacted and changed through the experience of meeting and walking with Jesus.

Theology Professor, Paul F. Knitter says, “From what both scholars and common sense tell us, it is clear that all New Testament Christology, all the titles and proclamations about Jesus, have their origin in the *saving experience* of Jesus by individuals and the community.”<sup>9</sup> This is to say that what we must learn about Jesus and His interactions with people, calling people, teaching people, and transforming people have come from people. In other words, a study of how Jesus did what Jesus did must begin with examining those who were around Him, those who experienced transformative moments in Christ’s presence in order to have a target in mind to strive for while engaging in any process of discipleship. Knitter also says of the early Christian community: “In their encounter with this man, they met the power and the reality of God, a reality that enabled them to feel, understand, and act differently from before. They had hope now, for this life and the next. Such a saving experience of Jesus was an experience of revelation. Jesus made something known to them, something that not only satisfied their minds but transformed their entire being. This experience of a saving power or revelation was the source and sustenance of all the interpretations of Jesus found in the

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<sup>9</sup> Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 175.

New Testament: “It was the sense that they found what they were looking for in Jesus that started the whole Christological ball rolling.”<sup>10</sup>

This profound thought shares a necessary starting point in creating an effective discipleship model and encourages us to create a strong foundation for that model to stand on by first knowing who Christ is to us, what’s Christ’s purpose in and for our lives, how does Christ’s power impact our lives and then we progress to experiencing the transformation from who we once were to who Christ calls us to be as disciples. So, knowing who Jesus is or about Jesus, alone, does not make any person a disciple, rather it is through the process of allowing the knowledge of Jesus to lead us to willingly exchange our way of thinking for His is what makes us Christ’s disciples. Therefore, experiencing transformation through Christ follows receiving revelation from God.

This process is seen in a conversation that Jesus had with His disciples in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel. Jesus and the disciples had come to Caesarea Philippi, and Jesus asked them: “Who do the people say that I am?” After they shared the people’s beliefs that He was one of the prophets who had come before Him, Jesus then asked: “But who do you say that I am?” Peter was the only disciple that gave an answer saying, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus’ reply to Peter’s answer displays that this was a revelation that had been given to him by God and no human. Embracing and expressing this revelation leads to a transformational moment in Peter’s life as Jesus then says to him, Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock, I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.

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<sup>10</sup> Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*, 175.

And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. (Matthew 16:18-19 NLT).

Now, this is not meant to suggest that it was Peter himself whom Christ was going to build His church on, but it was the confession of his faith in the truth of who Jesus was that would come to be the rock upon which the church would be built on and stand strong on for centuries to come. Even to this day, it is our confession of faith in the truth of who Jesus Christ is that stands as the hallmark of our Christianity as Romans 10:9 NKJV says: “that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Though Peter, along with the other disciples, would still have a long ways to go on their discipleship journey, at that moment Peter began to show signs of the transformation that Knitter spoke of earlier “they met the power and the reality of God, a reality that enabled them to feel, understand, and act differently from before.”

So, we see here in that Biblical encounter with Jesus, not a fully changed Peter, but definitely a changing Peter who has a proven growing knowledge of who Jesus is. Knowledge alone does not help us to fully understand who Christ is and what Christ does. Remember, Knitter suggests that “New Testament Christology, all the titles and proclamations about Jesus, have their origin in the *saving experience* of Jesus by individuals and the community.” So, there is revelational knowledge and then there is also experiential knowledge that aids us in our following, embracing, and becoming a disciple of Christ. As we continue to look at Peter as an example of this transformational

discipleship model, examining his “saving experience” or encounter with Jesus that adds to his journey would be necessary.

This researcher has always wondered how is it that Peter is the one who answers Jesus’ question so quickly and correctly, aside from the obvious as stated in the text that it was the Lord who revealed it to him. But then the question remains, why Peter? Peter, the rough around the edges disciple, the disciple Jesus had to rebuke by saying “Get behind me Satan”, the knife-wielding, ear-chopping disciple, the running for his life and trying to blend in with the crowd disciple, the three-time denying disciple, Peter. How is it that he is the one who makes the confession that is echoed by disciples to this very day and throughout eternity? Then the word of God along with the words of Knitter all came together and I realized that it was right there the whole time. Peter is making this confession of what he knows about Jesus in Matthew 16, but just a couple of chapters earlier in Matthew 14, Peter along with the other disciples are out on the water and Jesus is not present, and a storm arises and the water begins to beat against the boat making them believe that they would not make it, and all of a sudden here comes Jesus walking on the water scaring them even more, and Jesus speaks to calm their fears and let them know it was in fact Him. And Peter, the bold one, says, “if it’s really you call me to come to you.” Jesus calls and Peter starts walking on the water, and along the way, Peter loses faith and starts to sink and cries for Jesus to save him and Jesus did just that, pulling him out of the water to safety.

Peter is the only one in Matthew 14 who has now gained a “*saving experience*” to add to his journey. Now his own saving encounter, along with the revelation from God about who Jesus is, encourages Peter’s faith to know who Jesus is and just what Jesus did

and still does. This helps us to see that our experiences in life all serve us in our growing knowledge of who Jesus is and they more adequately aid us in our striving to follow Christ and imitate the life that Christ lived as we seek to live as His Disciples.

In his book entitled *God So Loved the World: A Christology for Disciples*, author Jonathan R. Wilson insist that

Jesus Christ is not merely a figure of the past. Therefore, our Christology cannot be confined to a study of the past. Jesus Christ is alive and active today in the kingdom, the world, and the church. Nevertheless, the church's final authority for discerning that work is the story of Jesus Christ recorded in Scripture by human beings through the trustworthy guidance of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, our study of the continuing work of Christ has directed us back to the earlier chapters on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.”<sup>11</sup>

This study of discipleship confirms the theological significance of establishing an intentional discipleship process at the LACC. Just as the life and works of Jesus and Christology itself are the most essential parts of the Gospel, discipleship is among the core pillars of Christology. This project proposes that there must exist a clear understanding of and a close adherence to the path and process that Christ took in imparting to the disciples in our local context to have an effective discipleship journey.

This researcher was enlightened by the article in AATF Admin entitled “Theologizing Christology and Discipleship in Earliest Christian Writings: Reflections for the Context of Burma”. The article further confirmed the significance of establishing an intentional discipleship process at the church. This account is given of Christology and Discipleship being two variables that characterizes a Christian’s singular identity:

Drawing upon insights gleaned from observations regarding the formation of early Christian living and community amid the dominance of Rome, this study

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan R. Wilson, *God So Loved the World: A Christology for Disciples* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 153.

will offer theological analysis of Christians' response to ill-treatment in the context of Burma through the lens of Christology and discipleship.

Christology and discipleship are the two variables that characterize a Christian's singular identity, together defining what it means theologically to be Christian as individuals and in community in this world. Arguably, the earliest "Christian movement" was not a religious mobilization, as many tend to assume, but the theological exercises early Christians launched in various trajectories in response to God's plan of salvation manifest in Jesus' own submissive life. In line with de Jonge, this paper argues that the earliest Christians' writings, including the gospels, indicate how Jesus' followers formed a new community to enact Christological meanings in their lives in response to the system of communal favouritism that victimized many in the first-century Roman world.<sup>12</sup>

The AATF article discusses what the integration of Christology and discipleship reveals as follows:

The integration of Christology and discipleship reveals the embodiment of the royal appointment for the salvific mission. Thus, the disciples are summoned to operate this saving office through discipleship. The formation of the Christian community/gathering is thus necessary to guard one's identity as a Christian and disciple (cf., Acts 11:26). Here, stewardship plays a vital role by becoming the meeting point between Christology and discipleship in supporting the formation of messianic assemblies to carry out their salvific task.<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This researcher agrees with this AATF article's conclusion of Christian discipleship as related to God's gift of salvation and the discipleship community's transformative response:

The Christian discipleship affirms that God's gift of salvation is accessible regardless of one's circumstances or being yoked by unjust systems. In

<sup>12</sup> AATF Admin, "Theologizing Christology and Discipleship in Earliest Christian Writings: Reflections for the Context of Burma," <https://aatfweb.org/2018/06/06/theologizing-christology-and-discipleship-in-earliest-christian-writings-reflections-for-the-context-of-burma/> Christology and discipleship are thus mutually co-defined and, the royal appointment for the salvific mission.

<sup>13</sup> AATF Admin, "Theologizing Christology and Discipleship in Earliest Christian Writings: Reflections for the Context of Burma," <https://aatfweb.org/2018/06/06/theologizing-christology-and-discipleship-in-earliest-christian-writings-reflections-for-the-context-of-burma/> Christology and discipleship are thus mutually co-defined and, the royal appointment for the salvific mission.

theological thinking, God is the initiator of God's salvific mission, which provides assurance in spirit and life. The inner relationship between discipleship and Christological beliefs enabled early Christian communities to find peace of mind, spiritual power, the love of truth, and hatred of wicked systems despite their undergoing suffering, persecution, and hardship. Indeed, one's discipleship means to believe in Jesus and his Christological office and to exercise Christian stewardship. It also means standing against political injustice due to the exercise of dominant systems, such as that in the Roman world. Discipleship thus plays a transformative role in realizing God's mission. However, this does not mean rebellious actions and reactions against the powerful, since discipleship is not manufactured out of the enterprise of prejudice and hateful sentiments. Christian discipleship codifies collective stewardship and courageous initiatives to transform a communal circle by casting out all evil spirits, cowardice, and irresponsible attitudes.<sup>14</sup>

This suggests that Jesus is the model for how disciples are to approach issues of social injustice and unrest within community and culture. Seeing beyond the person or people and recognizing and speaking against the spirit of evil that exists and works through the human soul. This is further supported by the ATFF Admin's claim that

Christological discipleship means guarding the truth of salvation by means of the activities of peace and of the spirit of God within oneself and one's community as a whole. Indeed, Jesus' earliest disciples comprised various groups of peoples such as the multitude (Lk 3:1-8), the unidentified (Lk 2:15-16), the apostles, and women (Lk 3:32-35; 10:29-30). This rightly reminds us that the messianic community did not conform to the social norms of the time. This discipleship community became a force transcending all kinds of barriers in their everyday life while ministering for the salvific mission.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> AATF Admin, "Theologizing Christology and Discipleship in Earliest Christian Writings: Reflections for the Context of Burma," <https://aatfweb.org/2018/06/06/theologizing-christology-and-discipleship-in-earliest-christian-writings-reflections-for-the-context-of-burma/> Christology and discipleship are thus mutually co-defined and, the royal appointment for the salvific mission.

<sup>15</sup> AATF Admin, "Theologizing Christology and Discipleship in Earliest Christian Writings: Reflections for the Context of Burma," <https://aatfweb.org/2018/06/06/theologizing-christology-and-discipleship-in-earliest-christian-writings-reflections-for-the-context-of-burma/> Christology and discipleship are thus mutually co-defined and, the royal appointment for the salvific mission.

For this researcher, the importance of Christological discipleship is grounded and made to be a simple concept by viewing it as the means by which the believer moves beyond only seeing Jesus Christ as the Man, the Messiah, and the Messenger, but rather as the Model. Jesus is not only the model for our lives as individual believers, but also Jesus provides the model for how we can lead others or disciple others into a relationship with Him and assist them in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ.

As Jesus became the model for making disciples, much emphasis was placed on the importance of genuine relationships. So much intentional time, teaching, oversight and sharing in life experiences was invested in the development of the early disciples. Thus, relationship is the foundation for discipleship. Jesus' model for discipleship also consisted of demonstration, in that He didn't just say what to do, He showed the disciples what to do. The earthly life and ministry of Jesus exemplifies the values and principles He taught and preached, so that the disciples could provide a visible and real-time model for every disciple to imitate. Discipleship is more than just a program offered by the church; it is a lifelong journey of following Christ and growing in His likeness to become the church. This process is not simply about knowledge acquisition, but about genuine transformation.

The disciples being a witness to the way Jesus displayed compassion, humility, and obedience to God, learned how to authentically live out their own faith in God. This made them examples to those who would become believers after Jesus had ascended to glory. By being a living example of living by faith in God, Jesus also focused on the spiritual formation of His disciples. Jesus nurtured their spiritual growth by addressing specific matters of the heart, such as faith, humility, and love which focused not only on

their outward actions but also on their inner transformation. Through the scriptures that share the experiences that Jesus had with the disciples we learn that this transformation process wasn't an easy one, but one filled with challenges. Out of all the areas of their lives that were challenged, it was their faith that Jesus challenged the most. As they followed Jesus, often they were pushed beyond their comfort zones, and they were encouraged to embrace risks and trust in God's provision.

Jesus' model of discipleship was one that was empowering as well. Jesus empowered his disciples with hands-on training and access to participate in ministry. In Matthew 10:1-8 and Luke 9:1-6 the Bible records the accounts of Jesus sending the disciples out to preach, heal the sick, and cast out demons, which gave them the real-world experience to put into practice what they had learned from Him. Though these experiences at times humbled them, they also gained confidence in their gifts and were able to discover a deeper relationship with God and widen their understanding of their calling as disciples. By following the model that Jesus provided for them and relying on the guidance of the Holy Spirit that Jesus left to be with and within them, the early disciples continued the work that Christ assigned to them. As Christians today, we should embrace the very same model, that is Jesus Christ, so that we can effectively continue the work of disciple-making in our communities and beyond.

Within the heart of every community of faith lies the transformative power of discipleship. For men in the church, the call to discipleship offers a unique opportunity to deepen their faith, establish meaningful relationships, and emerge as leaders in both their families and congregations. The Men's Ministry of Loudon Avenue Christian Church is committed to guiding men on their spiritual journey, fostering an environment that

nurtures personal growth and collective fellowship through a variety of discipleship opportunities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The Loudon Avenue Christian Church, like many, has gone through several changes over the last few years, some prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, some during its highest level of impact which caused a national social quarantine, and we are noticing in multiple areas a need for continued attention to be given and changes made as we have reemerged from quarantine back into in-person engagement. These changes and enhancements can be seen in the integration of technology, the restructuring of weekly worship services, and how we connect and communicate with one another for meetings, fellowship, and study. We also have been led on a journey of redefining many previously known terms and ministry perspectives such as what is an active church member when we now must consider those who consistently worship, study, and fellowship with us on a weekly basis, but now via live stream and video conferencing rather than in person.

How do we make people feel welcome and included, though they have never physically visited the church building but who feel like and desire to be a part of our congregation though they don't live in the same city or state? With those and many other questions being asked, and various areas of our church ministry being evaluated and reimaged, now, more than ever is the Christ-mandated mission and call to make disciples remaining a vital focus of the church that must not change in its missional goal;

but requires a change to be made by those who strive to do the work of discipleship. This concept is illustrated in the non-church related discipline of Transformational Leadership, which this writer will explore in support of this project entitled A Model for Revitalizing Men's Ministry: An Intentional Discipleship Process. This project will involve establishing an intentional discipleship process in the church. This discipleship process has the potential to revitalize the Men's Ministry, allowing men to experience spiritual growth and increase their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

Discipleship is not meant to be turned on and off by a switch or become a one-day-a-week thing that we put on with our Sunday morning attire. Being a disciple is a daily life choice and a daily charge to focus our hearts on following and being like Jesus in our decisions, actions, attitude, and engagement with others. The reality remains that our world, culture, society, and lives change daily and are impacted by shifting priorities, perspectives, politics, and personal desires/goals. So, with our lives being set in such a transient and free-flowing atmosphere, the inherent problem that must be carefully observed and overcome for church leaders and congregations who wish to remain relevant and effective is the thought that they can utilize the same ideas, procedures, and practices that they have always used in the process of making disciples. There then, must be not only an allowance for but rather an appeal for leaders to embrace models that promote creativity when it comes to calling persons into discipleship as well as imploring a style of leadership that is flexible and therefore able to fit and function within multiple lifestyles and remain faithful to the goal of discipleship.

Sociologist, James V. Downton classified this style of leadership as unique from others and in 1973 coined the term “Transformational Leadership”. Later, to better define it, leadership expert James MacGregor Burns, would classify transformational leaders as follows: “Transforming leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation.”<sup>1</sup> Burns related to the difficulty in differentiation between management and leadership and claimed that the differences are in characteristics and behaviors. He established two concepts: “transforming leadership” and “transactional leadership”. According to Burns,

“The transforming approach creates significant change in the life of people and organizations. It redesigns perceptions and values, and changes expectations and aspirations of employees. Unlike in the transactional approach, it is not based on a “give and take” relationship, but on the leader’s personality, traits and ability to make a change through example, articulation of an energizing vision and challenging goals. Transforming leaders are idealized in the sense that they are a moral exemplar of working towards the benefit of the team, organization and/or community.”<sup>2</sup>

Burns theorized that “transforming and transactional leadership were mutually exclusive styles. Transactional leaders usually do not strive for cultural change in the organization, but they work in the existing culture while transformational leaders can try to change organizational culture.”<sup>3</sup>

In their article entitled “Transformational Leadership: The Transformation of Managers and Associates”, Derek Farnsworth, Jennifer L. Clark, John Hall, Shannon

<sup>1</sup> James MacGregor Burns, “Transformational Leadership,” <https://www.langston.edu/sites/default/files/basic-content-files/TransformationalLeadership.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> James MacGregor Burns, “Transformational Leadership,” <https://www.langston.edu/sites/default/files/basic-content-files/TransformationalLeadership.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> James MacGregor Burns, “Transformational Leadership,” <https://www.langston.edu/sites/default/files/basic-content-files/TransformationalLeadership.pdf>.

Johnson, Allen Wysocki, and Karl Kepner give this account of Transformational Leadership:

To use this approach in the workforce, one must first understand exactly what transformational leadership is. In the simplest terms, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms individuals (Northouse 2001). In other words, transformational leadership is the ability to get people to want to change, to improve, and to be led. It involves assessing associates' motives, satisfying their needs, and valuing them (Northouse 2001). Therefore, a transformational leader could make the company more successful by valuing its associates. One successful transformational leader was Sam Walton, founder of Wal-Mart, who often visited Wal-Mart stores across the country to meet with associates to show his appreciation for what they did for the company. Walton gave "rules for success" in his autobiography, one of which was to appreciate associates with praise (Walton 1996). There are four factors to transformational leadership, (also known as the "four I's"): idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Each factor will be discussed to help managers use this approach in the workplace.

- Idealized influence describes managers who are exemplary role models for associates. Managers with idealized influence can be trusted and respected by associates to make good decisions for the organization.

- Inspirational motivation describes managers who motivate associates to commit to the vision of the organization. Managers with inspirational motivation encourage team spirit to reach goals of increased revenue and market growth for the organization.

- Intellectual stimulation describes managers who encourage innovation and creativity through challenging the normal beliefs or views of a group. Managers with intellectual stimulation promote critical thinking and problem solving in an effort to make the organization better.

- Individual consideration describes managers who act as coaches and advisors to the associates. Managers with individual consideration encourage associates to reach goals that help both the associates and the organization. Effective transformational leadership results in performances that exceed organizational expectations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Derek Farnsworth, Jennifer L. Clark, John Hall, Shannon Johnson, Allen Wysocki, and Karl Kepner, "Transformational Leadership: The Transformation of Managers and Associates", <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf>.

## Interdisciplinary Theory

The mission of the church today is the same as it was upon Christ giving the command to go make disciples. This is still a call to lead others on a transformational journey from who they know themselves to be, to becoming who Christ has created and called them to be. This requires a leader, as mentioned, who is not only invested in the results that a follower may accomplish but is concerned about the transformational journey and experience that the follower has in becoming a disciple. This project's aim is to assert that if persons, more specifically men, would participate in an intentional discipleship journey aimed toward their spiritual growth, then there will be a potential increase in their desire and willingness to engage in a lifestyle that embraces Bible study, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

This chapter focuses on the discipline of Transformational Leadership as the way in which those who will lead through this relational journey should approach their role in the process of intentional discipleship, recognizing the need to transform and commit while on this journey. This researcher agrees with the premise made by author Karl Inge Tangen in his chapter on *Rethinking Transformation Leadership and Participation* that "both transformational leadership and transformational commitments as morally desirable."<sup>5</sup>

It is essential that the leaders of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church reflect on where we have been in order to chart where we are going in terms of intentional discipleship. Also, the church must note lessons learned from past experiences, the good,

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<sup>5</sup> Karl Inge Tangen, "Rethinking Transformational Leadership and Participation," <https://scite.ai/reports/rethinking-transformational-leadership-and-participation-6RVVOr>.

the bad, and the ugly. Tangen notes that this reflective space is a “condition for authentic transformational commitment” and expounds on the importance of this reflective space as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Reflective space is important for a number of reasons. It is necessary to provide space for critical reflections, but is also necessary to allow a given transformational commitment to be made in syneidesis with oneself. Without reflective space, the person’s integrity is not secured, and I will therefore suggest that a degree of reflective space is necessary to qualify a given commitment as authentically transformational. Here I follow James McGregor Burns, who suggested leadership was moral if it was based on an informed choice (Burns 1978, Bass 1985, p. 182). At the same time it is difficult to determine the exact criteria for the degree of reflexive space, since an inter-deterministic view of human agency at best can speak about relative autonomy – and churches are by nature what Bauman (1997) calls monotheistic communities that do not offer alternative horizon narratives.

For these reasons I will propose only the following minimalist criteria:

1. The person should regularly reflect on the church’s beliefs and practices, his or her commitment to the church, and on how this affects his or her life (including the family).
2. He or she should be encouraged to do so, by the organization.
3. People should feel that they are accepted if they choose to fall back to a more passive relation, without any painful economical or social sanctions beyond legal obligations.

The Loudon Avenue Christian Church understands the need to focus on visionary leadership in its quest for effective discipleship. Tangen suggests that “both visionary leadership and reflective space are necessary to create critical loyalty and robust commitment beyond initial enthusiasm.”<sup>7</sup> Tangen provides this study of how individual consideration also means sensitivity to the follower’s mode of inner conversation:<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Karl Inge Tangen, “Rethinking Transformational Leadership and Participation,” <https://scite.ai/reports/rethinking-transformational-leadership-and-participation-6RVVOr>.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Inge Tangen, “Rethinking Transformational Leadership and Participation,” <https://scite.ai/reports/rethinking-transformational-leadership-and-participation-6RVVOr>.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Inge Tangen, “Rethinking Transformational Leadership and Participation,” <https://scite.ai/reports/rethinking-transformational-leadership-and-participation-6RVVOr>.

### *Existential Dramatic and Theo-Dramatic Leadership*

The model will then include five key dimensions. The first dimension might be called existential-dramatic leadership. In an ecclesial setting, Theo-dramatic leadership might be a more appropriate label. This type of leadership has affinity with what Bass calls inspirational motivation, but unlike Bass's general approach, Theo-dramatic leadership is specifically grounded in the larger horizon narrative of the Bible. Theo-dramatic leadership, as it has been observed in this study, is more than teaching or narrating the Bible. Organizational visions and stories become inspirational to the degree that they are able to help the participant to see how she or he can be a part of and contribute to the Theo-drama. It is dramatic in Vanhoozer's sense of 'showing rather than telling' (Vanhoozer 2005, p. 48). This means that the Christian leader is more than an inspiring motivator, or skillful teacher; he or she must be seen as a dramatic director who helps people to understand and enact the Biblical script, in a specific context.

In this process ethically inspiring imagoes seem to play a crucial role in the late modern context. I will suggest that both churches, to some degree, turn ethics into a form of visionary living. Unlike rules, imagoes call for creative imagination in order to be applied. This function is demonstrated in Brittany's account of how Clarke's teaching on 'being the friend you want to have' stimulated imagination, or if one likes, a kind of ethical poetry that changed her inner conversation and enabled her to act in new ways. Imagoes co-exist with rules and principles, but this form of intellectual stimulation may also be seen in relation to the 'new' centered structure. Both churches, and in particular Pinsekirken, seem to offer a combination of proximity and sufficient reflective space. Centered organizations give little power to each member in terms of influencing corporate policies. On the other hand, they allow more individual 'freedom' in terms of personal policies and reflexive individuality. In contrast, an egalitarian game that depends on an agreement among all 'insiders' may be more dependent on rules.

### *Practice Dynamic Leadership – Organizing for Effective and Aesthetic Execution*

Visionary and practice dynamic leadership should not be conflated, since practice dynamic leadership also requires well organized 'execution' that show rather than tell. As Earnest's story vividly demonstrates, visionary narratives are far more powerful when they can be 'seen' and embodied through concrete practices. Firstly, on an organizational level, task orientated and performance dynamic leadership includes strategic prioritizing of resources in order to generate more resources, and organizational learning in terms of reflection on the efficiency of methods, in the light of the overarching vision. We have also seen that practice dynamic leadership includes forms of aesthetic contextualization, in terms of music genres and graphic profiles that result in excellent performance.

### *Performance Empowering Leadership*

Secondly, from the perspective of the participant, performance dynamic leadership can be understood as empowering leadership. From motivational theory one may label this achievement motivation, see McAdams 2006, pp. 279 ff. 9 It seems to include both what the organizational psychologists Conger and

Kanungo (1998, see also Kanungo and Mendonca 1996, pp. 61 ff.) call ‘relational empowerment’ in terms of providing delegated authority, and ‘motivational empowerment’ in terms of providing skills and psychological trust that increase peoples’ ability to act. That enables agency power<sup>8</sup> has been demonstrated in Brittany, Earnest and Marcus’ stories, and includes facilitation of practices, a large degree of delegation, training, encouragement of risk taking and initiative, followed up by emotional support and various degrees of mentoring and coaching.<sup>9</sup> At this point, it may be reasonable to suggest that Bass’s term ‘intellectual stimulation’ seems somewhat narrow. Intellectual stimulation is only one part of a process that may be described by Kouzes and Posner (2007) as ‘enabling people to act’.

#### *Hosting Transformation — Indirect and Direct Relational Leadership*

The analyses in previous chapters have shown that relational qualities stand out as one of single most important reasons, if not as the most important reason, for identifying with a church. Interestingly, close significant others seem to be more important than the organization’s staff as attractive role models. Moreover, my analyses also suggest that proximate relationships have dynamics of their own that may create self-transcendent commitments. The importance of empathy in the transformational process has recently been confirmed by a missiological study (Miller 2009). Seen together, these findings might suggest that one of the most important processes that produces identification and commitment takes place outside of the organizational center, in the ‘close periphery’. This does not necessarily imply generic priority, since these processes are also related to visionary teaching and practice facilitation that take place in the center, yet it might imply that indirect relational leadership is extremely important, in terms of facilitating identification with the organization.

The Loudon Avenue Christian Church is committed to the process of becoming better transformational leaders as described by author Lawrence Minks in his book entitled *The Realities of Transformational Leadership* as follows:<sup>9</sup>

A critical part of the process of becoming a better leader is the necessity for deep understanding of one’s own journey and how that journey has influenced one’s perspectives. Only with this greater awareness, through self-reflection and discovery, can leaders contribute legitimately to the development of others. Transformational leaders bring vision, integrity, authenticity, expertise, compassion and commitment to a higher purpose that moves others to new ways of thinking and action. Unlike other leaders, transformational leaders move people from a limited view of identity into a larger understanding of who they are as individuals, groups and organizations. Transformational leaders continually grow

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Minks, *The Realities of Transformational Leadership* (Independently Published, November 21, 2019), 15-17, 65.

and expand as human beings, personally and professionally, never satisfied with the status quo.

Transformational change requires different ways of thinking and working in order to contribute effectively to the change process. This means acceptance of new roles, responsibilities, tasks, and relationships.

During a community meeting with local leaders who were called together to address the rising rate of crime in and around the community where the Loudon Avenue Christian Church serves, this researcher heard someone say that “there is a system in place that leads our young men to lives of crime.” The person then said, “To destroy a system, you need a system.” Thus, the following new insights have been gained on this matter from author Steve Cuss in his book entitled *Managing Leadership Anxiety*:

A system is simply a group of people who function in an emotional unit. Because everyone in the system is interconnected (connected to one another and affected by one another’s connections), a system becomes a complex environment that generates a lot of emotional subtext, especially if one member of the system is unhealthy or disruptive. Systems become anxious when members of a system adopt and escalate one another’s anxiety and reactivity. System leadership is a developed skill where the leader pays as much attention to the system dynamic as she does to conversation. A leader who pays attention to a system isn’t so much concerned with the content of what is said, but rather the process of how people are relating and behaving. Systems get stuck in predictable patterns and a skilled leader can break through this “stuckness” by paying attention to relational patterns and help his people detangle and break free.<sup>10</sup>

The below discussion of love, trust, discipleship, and transformation being more important than information as discussed in the book *Transformational Discipleship* by Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation provided these further insights and shaped this researcher’s understanding of this project:

Leaders should be careful not to become Pez dispensers of information. A Pez dispenser is pretty easy to operate. Someone wants a piece of candy, so they take the Pez dispenser, tilt back the character’s head, and out comes a sugary treat. Many leaders functionally lead the same way.

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<sup>10</sup> Steve Cuss, *Managing Leadership Anxiety* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2019), 101.

They see themselves primarily as the theological, relational, or ecclesiological expert—the one with all the answers. People come to them asking questions, and these leaders simply tilt their head back and dispense information in a palatable way, congratulating themselves afterward for actually knowing the answer to the question someone was asking.

Of course, information is important. But we must realize that rarely are people asking questions simply for the sake of information.

Perhaps Jesus was interested in transformation more than information.

Leaders must decide to press love to the forefront rather than information.

Information must still be learned. Truth must be encountered and the right lenses put in place, but love must lead the believers there first. So be careful, leaders, that we don't treat intellect as the measure of following Jesus. Information dispensation is the easier way, but Jesus wants us to take the harder and longer—way to discipleship.

“...the last piece of transformational discipleship brings us full circle because leadership is not only necessary to transformational discipleship; it's also the end result of transformational discipleship. As Alexander Acosta told us, “In creating disciples, we are creating leaders.”<sup>11</sup>

From an evangelistic point of view the Loudon Avenue Christian Church gleans these Principles of Transformational Leadership as presented by author Hugh Blaine:

Let's be clear about the one primary benefit of clarifying your leadership purpose: The jumping-off point for greatness both individually and organizationally is a clear and compelling purpose. People at work or in your personal life who have achieved something extraordinary or who live lives defined as “rewarding” and “uplifting” have a clear and compelling idea about what is important to them, why it is important, and what value they will achieve by working to accomplish it. For transformational leaders, they recognize that each of their stakeholders likewise has a screening process for listening to and following a leader's lead. Leaders must be the primary evangelist for their project. And although the word evangelist may have a negative connotation based on some political or religious intransigence, an evangelist is someone who builds a critical mass of belief, support, enthusiasm, and engagement for an idea or aspiration. In many ways, leaders have to balance being open and receptive to input with being single-minded, driven, and not taking no for an answer. They have to hit the street proclaiming what they believe and why it's important.

To persuade someone is defined by Merriam-Webster as “causing someone to do something through reasoning or argument and to cause someone to believe something, especially after a sustained effort.” Persuasion is therefore about convincing and influencing someone to act or think a certain way.

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<sup>11</sup> Eric Geiger, Michael Kelley, and Philip Nation, *Transformational Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2012), 205-215.

Persuasion in transformational leadership is not about eloquent and stirring speeches like Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address or Martin Luther King's I Have A Dream speech. Persuasion in transformational leadership is about positive influence, not manipulation. In its purest form persuasion is the shaping with full integrity the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and behaviors of another.<sup>12</sup>

Although the term Transformational Leadership was not a titled discipline until 1973, previous chapters in this work allow this researcher to view the impact of this style of leadership and its presence Biblically, Historically, and Theologically. The Biblical foundations chapter gives an example of Jesus helping the disciples comprehend the lived-out meaning of discipleship in Luke 5:1-11. Jesus meets men, fishermen, right where they are, in their everyday life, and introduces to them a new way of life. With a miraculous moment that was greater than any other that these men had experienced prior to this encounter, Jesus teaches them that there is much more to fish for than just fish, but also people. He would go beyond that place and they would follow and along the way be taught the values of discipleship and began to prepare and equip them to not only be disciples but to ultimately go and make disciples of others. Thus, through this form of leadership, men who initially sought to catch fish for men, would transform into men who sought to catch men for the Glory of God.

The Jesus we see teaching and sharing the message of salvation, arresting the attention of a crowd, and commandeering the boat of a fisherman all for the purpose of giving Glory to God was indeed a transformational leader. Jesus was an unstoppable force that caused such a change and that influenced the entire culture and world around him. Through an effective and intentional discipleship approach, the Loudon Avenue

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<sup>12</sup> Hugh Blaine, *7 Principles of Transformational Leadership* (Wayne, NJ: The Career Press, 2017), 28-126.

Christian Church plans to follow this example of how Jesus personified this style of leadership in order to continue to fulfill His earthly mission.

In the Historical foundations chapter, an example of discipleship is seen developed through the founding of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). The founder sought to create change and a transformative community, prompting him to develop the YMCA as a Christian Bible study group that fostered healthy ideals and provided a safe environment as a positive substitution to street life. The mission, vision, and commitment of The YMCA is to build strong communities. And through the strong leadership of the organization, the number of active locations has grown exponentially over the span of its rich history. Its transformational leadership model is complementary to the transformational mission of putting Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body.

In the Theological Foundations chapter, the discipleship journey is examined from the perspective of Christology. The early disciples were encouraged in their transformation into disciples by walking with the model for discipleship which was and is Jesus. Taking a Christological view of discipleship means for us, doing the same and gaining a firm understanding of not only who Jesus was then and is to us today, but also how Jesus did what He did. So, the theological view explores Christology as to encourage that there is no greater example of Christian Discipleship than that of Christ.

Below are further insights gained from the transformational leadership discipline that shape this researcher's understanding of this project presented by authors Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer in their book entitled *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations*:

We treasure the concept of “transformation,” because radical change is the heart of the Christian message and because the power of the gospel changes everything lives, churches, and communities.

Christians love “church, because God has chosen the community of Christ followers to make known His manifold wisdom (Eph. 3:10). When God transforms lives, He doesn’t just build temples of the Holy Spirit in individuals, He builds His church by adding more lives to the body. God uses the individuals in the church to bring about the transformation of more individuals and, consequently, the growth of the church. The church is God’s tool and instrument for His kingdom agenda.

As leaders, we sometimes fool ourselves into thinking that just managing the status quo is good enough. Some leaders take the merry-go-round approach to church. They think if they can just keep everyone moving, the flashing lights shining bright, and the music happy, they won’t get any complaints. Some leaders try to take the “don’t rock the boat” approach. They think that if we all remain very still in the boat, it won’t turn over. But it also won’t go anywhere.

The big problem? Whether still or busy, too few are making any real headway. Rather than missionary disciples for Christ going into the world, we have a group of people content to go in circles. God calls us to make a transformational impact on the world, not provide a carnival of frenetic activity for ourselves. But to make this impact, we must engage in His mission for His sake and on His terms. Pastors and church leaders must move beyond entertaining consumers and into engaging Christ’s mission.

Transformational leadership calls for a shift from the single Superman to the importance of an empowered and released people focusing on the mission of God. The mind shift we have described allows a new environment to emerge. Leaders in Transformational Churches have discovered, uncovered, and recovered the biblical principle that God does not limit Himself to using extraordinary people. Extraordinary people for God are simply ordinary people who are willing to be used. Transformational leaders look for those ready to experience the exceptional rather than those convinced they are exceptional. The transformational leadership environment values a sharper mission focus. As a leader’s mindset begins to shift toward a more missional approach, a new question emerges: Where am I leading God’s people? God has some incredibly gifted leaders, and we need each one. TC leaders have discovered how to move people away from themselves and toward the mission of God. The difference between creating a follower and developing a leader is helping them understand and commit to the mission of God to make disciples of all nations.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational Church: Creating a New Scorecard for Congregations* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 1, 3, 93, 94.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study and implementation of transformational leadership discipline practices will significantly impact this project as the Loudon Avenue Christian Church works to establish an intentional discipleship process in the church. This discipleship process has the potential to revitalize the Men's Ministry, allowing men to experience spiritual growth and increase their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community. This discipleship process also has the potential to encourage growth of individuals and growth of the church as expressed here in Pat Krulitz's article entitled "4 Essential Qualities of Transformational Leadership, and the Habits to Build Them":

Transformational leaders have a clear vision and bring people along toward that vision through inspiration. They not only lead toward results that matter but are also able to transform people and systems along the way, encouraging growth of individuals and growth of the organization. They encourage people to rise to their best self and act in service of the mission.

### 1. Developing Self-awareness

Transformational leaders are committed to personal growth, starting with a clear sense of self. They often have developed habits that encourage self-reflection, like journaling, seeking regular feedback, mindfulness, or meditation.

### 2. Creating a Vision

Transformational leaders develop habits of seeking out people with different perspectives, asking great questions from a place of openness and curiosity, and making space for reflection and research.

### 3. Bringing Others Along

With a strong sense of self and clarity of vision, transformational leaders have a remarkable ability to bring others along toward that vision. Transformational leaders develop habits of connecting with people at a human level and communicating in language that is inspiring and resonant.

### Being Courageous

### 4. Lastly, being a transformational leader requires courage.

Transformational leaders develop habits of noticing when they are operating from fear, or when they're being drawn by vision.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Pat Krulitz, "4 Essential Qualities of Transformational Leadership, and the Habits to Build Them," <https://optify.io/2022/09/12/4-essential-qualities-of-transformational-leadership-and-the-habits-to-build-them/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAw>.

This researcher affirms that discipleship should never be built on a moment, but rather as a continual movement and ongoing process that lives on beyond one person's transformation into a disciple but transcends into another person's journey of faith. This premise adds dimension to the ongoing nature of the effects of this project on the Loudon Avenue Christian Church and the universal church and is supported by Simon Sinek in his book entitled *Leaders Eat Last* as he insists that "great companies and great leaders are the ones able to succeed beyond any one leader and manage through hard times. What if we judge a leader not on what they do when they are holding the torch but on what happens after they pass it on?"<sup>15</sup> Sinek also notes that "a leader's legacy is only as strong as the foundation they leave behind that allows others to continue to advance the organization in their name."<sup>16</sup>

A leader's legacy then is multifaceted, encompassing their vision, values, impact on people, contributions to society, sustainability of their achievements, memorable moments, and personal growth journey. It is a reflection of their life as they were being developed as a leader and every moment that took place after they became a leader. This researcher believes that a leader's legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of those that they have touched and influenced.

Transformational leadership and discipleship share a common goal of inspiring, empowering, and developing individuals to reach their full potential and contribute to positive change in the world. By integrating the principles and characteristics of both,

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<sup>15</sup> Simon Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last* (New York, NY: Penguin Publishing Group, 2014), 20.

<sup>16</sup> Sinek, *Leaders Eat Last*, 22.

leaders can foster environments where people grow spiritually, personally, and professionally, ultimately making a lasting impact on individuals and society.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

While the Loudon Avenue Christian Church has grown as an influential beacon within its community over the years, experiencing tremendous growth in membership, and focusing on assimilating new members into the ministry, a structured Spiritual Discipleship Plan has not been put in place for persons to embrace and journey through, where existing and new members can experience an intentional process of being discipled. The Loudon Avenue Christian Church has actually been relying on relationship bonds to foster disciples and assuming that membership and discipleship are one in the same, Thus, the Loudon Avenue Christian is experiencing persons (men especially) falling into the margins of being a member, new members/believers being assimilated into church, but not introduced to following Christ, a lack of persons understanding what discipleship is and what it looks like in present times, persons not knowing how discipleship should impact their lives, and a lack of persons being willing to step into leadership roles.

The challenge is for the Loudon Avenue Christian to make new disciples of unsaved or unchurched persons from within the community by removing the barriers for them not attending church or participating in church activities. These barriers are often due to limited finances, physical challenges, family demands, unsure personal beliefs,

and lack of trust in the church and its leaders. We who are called disciples must be ready to disarm these barriers by our service and engaging outreach to others. Recent experiences of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church identifying new ways of engaging our men in our context provides a hope for relationship building that can be translated into disciple-making. Thus, confirming the need for the development and implication of a viable process at Loudon Avenue Christian Church that is utilized to help members mature in their spiritual growth to becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

Loudon Avenue Christian Church sees approximately sixty men attend weekly worship; however, only a fraction of them actively engages in ministry outreach opportunities, bible study, or serve in leadership roles. The area of ministry that this project addressed within the Loudoun Avenue Christian Church was discipleship, specifically men's discipleship. The Men's Ministry had the least participation among the main ministry groups within the church such as the women's ministry and youth ministry. Although the Men's Ministry, known as Disciple Men's Fellowship, provided opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, Christian education, and creative ministries to enable men to develop a sense of personal growth, very few were connecting with the church outside of weekly worship experiences on Sunday mornings.

The biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations previously presented have informed this project. Specifically, the academic exploration into these four foundations have undergird this project by addressing the problem and solution to male members of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church not being actively engaged in the life of the church and Christian discipleship.

The biblical foundations module taught in this project presented a study of Luke 5:1-11, which highlighted the first call of the early disciples, serving as a starting point and a model for a discipleship method that can be used by all that are called to the work of discipleship. Jesus in this encounter with these men displayed for us a method for engaging in discipleship that impacts one and then discipleship that can impact many. The passage also showed Jesus not waiting for persons to come to Him and then teaching them how to be a disciple, but it showed Jesus going to where they were, entering what was familiar to them and transforming it and ultimately them into what He desired for them to be. Likewise, being guided by this biblical model, throughout this project men were trained by gaining an understanding of what a disciple is and the process of discipleship that will be able to be adapted for our current ministry context.

The historical foundations module taught in this project emphasized that a structured discipleship plan approach can be traced back to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), where the goal was to take men from all classes of life and more specifically young men and train/disciple them and ultimately lead them to salvation in Jesus Christ so that they could then multiply themselves by leading others through that same discipleship process. This project emulated the commitment displayed by the YMCA Founders to see the need to engage in training men from various stages of life in Christian principles that would not only lead to salvation and church membership but also create disciples who long to work at discipleship.

The theological foundations module taught in this project focused on understanding what a disciple is and what true discipleship looks like. Discipleship highlights for us a roadmap of the process that Jesus took with the early disciples and that

we can still embrace and implement today. The intimate process is founded on teaching the commands and truths of Christ, embracing and interacting with people as Christ did, undertaking the missionary responsibility to serve others as Christ, and sharing the ultimate message of salvation, sanctification, and justification that comes through Christ. This project confirmed that there must exist a clear understanding of and a close adherence to the path and process that Christ took in imparting to the disciples in our local context to have an effective discipleship journey.

The interdisciplinary foundations module taught in this project focused on how the non-church related discipline of transformational leadership is an essential lens through which to view discipleship. Grasping the importance of transformational leadership has been key for the leaders of Loudon Avenue Christian Church to feel that they are equipped and prepared to engage in the process of not only becoming and being a disciple but also making disciples of other men. Transformational leadership places emphasis on how the relationship between leaders and followers help each other advance to a higher level of being and becoming. As discipleship is a transformational journey of discovery, identity, and destiny, leaders are needed who can be committed to change and the time and steps that change take. Discipleship is Transformation and transformation was a consistent theme throughout this project. This project proved that through intentional transformative leadership, consisting of teaching, training, study, and sharing in one another's life journey, men experienced spiritual growth and increased their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community. This project used a qualitative research design to develop a model for

revitalizing Men's Ministry via an intentional discipleship process at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church.

## **Methodology**

### *Hypothesis*

If the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church would participate in an intentional discipleship process, then they will experience spiritual growth, and increase their engagement and participation in prayer, study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

### *Project Purpose*

The purpose of this project was to develop a defined process that would help to guide men through an intentional progression which results in their spiritual growth and produce spiritually mature men that demonstrate increased support and service to the ministry. This researcher believes that developing a stronger ever-growing core group of men would allow them to support other men embracing and undergoing the very same spiritual growth journey.

The basis for this project is found in the process that the early disciples went through as they were led by Jesus Christ to become the Apostles, early leaders, and driving forces of the early church and serve as models for the modern-day church. The process of becoming a disciple was not completed overnight, nor was it fully realized with just one encounter, conversation, sermon, lesson, or witnessing of a single miracle,

but it took time. In the time those disciples spent following Jesus, there were many repeated lessons and misunderstandings before the disciples grew into what Christ had called them to be. So too was our approach to developing men into effective disciples.

The process did not seek to rush spiritual growth, but to take the necessary time to walk through every phase of the journey with individuals sharing feedback as to where they see their development/growth throughout the process.

### *Project Design and Participants*

Professional Associates were consulted on a regular basis on project design, methodology, implementation, and analysis. Context Associates served as the Journey Facilitators and met weekly to discuss respective project roles and status of the project as well as facilitated the in-person participant gatherings. The project participants consisted of a selected group of eleven men who are current members of Loudon Avenue Christian Church, some who have been there for more than ten years (prior to my Pastorate), and some who have united with the church since my arrival. The ages ranged from the late twenties to mid-sixties. The goal was for each participant to embrace the calling and process of discipleship and feel equipped to participate in the process of disciple-making. The project took place over seven weeks, consisted of one seventy-five minute in-person gathering per week at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church, and was called a Discipleship Journey.

Each session was conducted using the following outline:

- I. Refreshing Reflections (Sharing thoughts on previous session)
- II. Bible Lesson

- III. Reflective Assessment Questions
- IV. Introduction to Journal Assignments
- V. Daily Journal Focus

Through this project, this researcher was looking for a conative change in the behavior of the men of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church evidenced by them experiencing spiritual growth and increasing their engagement and participation in prayer, study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

### *The Collection of Data*

A qualitative research method was used where the research was conducted at The Loudon Avenue Christian Church, and data was collected by the researcher. The design of inquiry was phenomenological, as the researcher describes the “essence” of the experience of men through the discipleship journey. Primary data was collected from pre-test surveys, post-test surveys, reflective assessments, daily focus journals, and spiritual gift assessments.

This researcher chose pre and posttest surveys as a means of gathering data in order to gauge changes in the participants’ thought patterns and behavior before taking the discipleship training and after as supported below in the article entitled “Pre-Tests: Everything You Need to Know”, in ThoughtCo.com:

Pretests measure student growth over time through comprehensive assessment. They can show a student’s level of understanding before and after instruction, even while instruction is still happening.

Comparing pre- and post-tests allows teachers to track student development from one class to the next, between topics, and even from day-to-day. Most forms of assessment just determine whether a student meets

expectations after they've been taught, but these fail to account for prior knowledge and incremental progress.

Even when a student doesn't quite demonstrate proficiency on a post-test, pretests can show that they've grown. No amount of progress should be ignored and assessment should not be as limited as "yes" a student meets expectations or "no" they do not.<sup>1</sup>

This researcher chose Spiritual Gifts Tests as a means of gathering data in order to allow the participants to identify their gifts and begin to think about how to apply their gifts to ministry service. The Spiritual Gifts Test utilized was created by Pastor Jeff Carver of Southern California. It was administered with the intentions noted in Pastor Carver's article entitled "FREE Spiritual Gifts Test, Discover Your Purpose": To equip and encourage participants to live a life full of faith, loving God and people by helping them to: Identify the Gifts God Has Blessed Them With, Understand One's Gifts (And Personality Traits), and Use Gifts to Worship God And Serve Others.<sup>2</sup> This researcher chose reflective assessments and daily focus journals as means of gathering data in order to allow participants to document their experience through the project based on the teachings and journal prompts.

## **Implementation**

This project implementation guided a group of eleven men through a seven-week discipleship experience of gatherings, following a model that we see Jesus initiate with His first called disciples in Luke 5:1-11. The project participants selected for this project were men who currently hold membership at Loudoun Avenue Church. This researcher/pastor of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church hand-picked the participants and

<sup>1</sup> ThoughtCo.com, "Pre-Tests: Everything You Need to Know," <https://www.thoughtco.com/importance-and-uses-of-pretest-7674>.

<sup>2</sup> Spiritualgiftstest.com, "FREE Spiritual Gifts Test, Discover Your Purpose," <https://spiritualgifts.com>.

contacted them to invite them to be a part of this doctoral project, using in-person hand delivered invitations. Every effort was made to maintain participant confidentiality during this project, as this researcher was challenged by the potential for social and emotional impacts on participants should any intimate data be disclosed.

One deviation that this researcher made before beginning this project was the physical setting of the first session. The original plan was to have the initial session take place on a one-day fishing trip. The researcher wanted to utilize the setting of the fishing from the shore of a lake or a boat as a backdrop to connect the participants with the Scripture used throughout the project. The aim would've been to impose early on that the process of Discipleship does not necessarily begin in the confines of a church building, rather it begins in the hearts of those who welcome and allow Jesus to have space in their lives, no matter where they may be. In the future, this researcher plans to utilize this discipleship course again with then Men's Ministry as well as in a greater setting within the life and development of the church, and then probably incorporate that aspect in the initial session.

The following training sessions were conducted:

*Week One:* Sunday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Meet & Greet - 10 minutes

Informed Consent Form & Pre-Test Surveys - 20 minutes

Project Overview - 5 minutes

- Title: A Model for Revitalizing Men's Ministry: An Intentional Discipleship Process
- Hypothesis: If the men of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church participate in an intentional discipleship journey aimed toward their spiritual growth, then there will be an

increase in their participation in Bible study, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

Session 1 Lesson - Defining Disciples and Discipleship - 15 minutes

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. Where can we find exemplified characteristics of a disciple of Christ in the Bible?
2. What are at least 3 must-have characteristics of a disciple? Explain
3. What are characteristics that should not exist in discipleship?

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: In what ways have you experienced discipleship in your life/today?

*Week Two: Sunday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) - 15 minutes

Session 2 Lesson - “Giving Jesus Space in Your Boat” (Luke 5:1-11) - 35 minutes

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. Is Jesus' presence visible in every aspect of your life?
2. Should any aspect of our life be void of Jesus?
3. What does one sacrifice by giving Jesus space in their lives?

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: What areas in my life have I given Jesus space? What areas have remained inaccessible?

*Week Three: Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023*

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) - 15 minutes

Session 3 Lesson - “History of Ordinary Men” (Luke 5:4-7) - 35 minutes

\*Rev. David Dickey - History of Disciple Men of LACC  
 \*Pastor Holmes - Ordinary Men; Extraordinary Call!

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. In what ways do you see a need for Christ's impact on community issues?
2. How could the work of discipleship make an impact in our community today? Explain

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: Throughout this week, intentionally consider and list ways that men who are disciples of Jesus Christ could meet the needs of the community?

*Week Four:* Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) - 15 minutes

Session 4 Lesson - What Did Jesus Do? (Luke 5:4-7) - 35 minutes

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. How did Jesus model the lifestyle to follow for disciples?
2. In what ways can we model discipleship in our daily lives?

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: Throughout this week, intentionally consider How am I following the model? How can I better follow the model Jesus uses?

*Week Five:* Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) - 15 minutes

Session 5 Lesson - Transformers!!! (Luke 5:4-7) - 35 minutes

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. What does it mean to be a leader who seeks transformation?
2. How can we possibly track transformation through a discipleship process?  
\*(What indicators will show that transformation is taking and/or has taken place?)

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: Throughout this week, intentionally consider What difference is being made in my life?

*Week Six:* Sunday, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) - 15 minutes

Session 6 Lesson - The Disciple's Work!!! (Luke 5:4-7) - 25 minutes

\*Take Spiritual Gift Assessment & Review Results – 10 minutes

Reflective Assessment Questions – 15 minutes

1. How can you put your spiritual gift into action in your life?
2. How can you optimize the highest Kingdom use of your spiritual gift within church ministry?
3. How can your gift be a blessing to one who's an unbeliever? Explain

Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes

Daily Journal Focus: Throughout this week, intentionally consider: How would you restructure and or make an impact within Disciples Men's Ministry utilizing your Spiritual Gifts? (Involvement, Leadership, Studies, Activities, Events, etc.? ) THINK BIG!!!!

*Week Seven:* Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Refreshing Reflections (Sharing Thoughts on Previous Session) – 10 minutes

Review of Sessions – 20 minutes

Post-Test Surveys – 15 minutes

Closing Conversations – 15 minutes

### *Project Data Gathered*

Pre-test surveys were conducted on the first day of the project (see Appendix B).

Post-test surveys were conducted on the last day of the project (see Appendix C). Data from the pre-test surveys and post-test surveys are presented in Appendix D. Participants answered Reflective Assessment Questions during each session (see Appendix E). Data from the Reflective Assessment Questions is presented in Appendix F. Participants noted their responses to daily journal focus topics (see Appendix G). Data from the daily

journals are presented at Appendix H. Participants completed a Spiritual Gifts Test (see Appendix I). Data from the Spiritual Gifts Tests is presented in Appendix J. Data was analyzed from these tools to support the hypothesis for this project.

### *Conclusion*

This project was created to develop a discipleship process at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church. The results of the data revealed men in the church felt as though they had engaged God, the word of God, and the work of God in a new way that revealed or confirmed for them a new purpose and passion to be a disciple of Christ; men in the church saw a significant increase in their participation in bible study and fellowship opportunities; and men in the church grew a desire to take on leadership roles within the church that would help them to utilize their gifts in the service within the church and outreach to the community.

Overall, the project achieved the desired results. Training participants agreed the sessions were effective and achieved their objective. The project participants and facilitators recommended that the discipleship training sessions be continued, along with creative, interactive fellowship activities outside of the church setting.

### **Summary of Learning**

#### *Project Reflections*

The results of the data revealed that men were revitalized and guided through an intentional Discipleship Journey as a result of the seven-week process of learning what it

means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, helping to facilitate men being disciples, making disciples, and serving in leadership roles at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church. The effectiveness of this model can be attributed to four factors: Professional Associates, Context Associates, training module, and the researcher.

This researcher and project participants learned from several research tools utilized during this project. Specifically, this researcher relied heavily on data received via pre-test surveys and post-test surveys to help track participants' growing understanding of what discipleship is and express a newly developed level of comfort in engaging in a discipleship process. Another extremely useful measurement was witnessing participants express a change in their thinking and displaying a behavioral transformation in their lifestyle as a disciple. Additionally, the daily focus journal entries and weekly discussions helped to track the thought progress of each participant. This also helped to track participants' growth and progression by gaining insight from their own words and perspective of discipleship.

Participants' new and renewed engagement in the discipleship process beyond the project as they became more involved with various ministry activities, increased their personal prayer and study devotional time, sharing in church fellowship, and participating in community outreach to ultimately be able to share their faith story as a means of sharing Jesus. The Spiritual Gifts Test allowed the participants to identify their gifts and begin to think about how to apply their gifts to ministry service.

*Analysis of Data*

The aforementioned participant accomplishments confirm the success of this project as indicated in the below report of major findings, which are related to each project goal:

Major Finding #1 – Participants felt as though they had engaged God, the word of God, and the work of God in a new way that revealed or confirmed for them a new purpose and passion to be a disciple of Christ after attending the discipleship sessions at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church.

First Data Exemplar – In support of this finding when the men were asked the questions on pre and post-test surveys “Do you consider yourself a disciple?”, “Do you feel equipped to lead others to Christ?”, and “Do you consider yourself a leader?” their responses revealed that the project helped to increase their desire to engage more with God, the word of God, and the work of God. This finding also revealed that the men did not feel fully equipped to be a disciple, lead others to Christ, or be a leader in the church. This presents this researcher with the opportunity to continue training and fellowship opportunities.

Second Data Exemplar – The Reflective Assessment Questions revealed participating in the project positively impacted the men’s engagement with God, the word of God, and the work of God. The time of reflection led one participant to note “I guess you have to make sure as a leader you seek GOD’S guidance in your everyday life. You should read your Bible every day and pray every day. You need to reevaluate yourself often to make sure you are doing GOD’S will and not yours.”

Third Data Exemplar – Participant journal entries revealed that this project positively impacted the men in terms of engagement with God, the word of God, and the work of God. The journals reflected the men’s discussions and understanding of ways they had experienced discipleship in their lives, areas in their lives had they given Jesus space, ways they could meet the needs of the community, how to better follow the model Jesus uses, the difference being made in their lives, and how to restructure and or make an impact within Disciples Men’s Ministry utilizing their spiritual gifts.

Fourth Data Exemplar – The Spiritual Gifts Tests revealed gifts of Prophecy which will encourage the men to feel as though they have engagement with God, the word of God, and the work of God in a new way, revealing or confirming a new purpose and passion to be a disciple of Christ.

When the men were asked on the pre and post-test surveys “Do you know what your spiritual gift is?” many answered “Yes” however, acknowledged difficulty knowing when and how to serve in the church using their spiritual gifts. This finding confirmed that while the Spiritual Gifts Test tool is very effective, more intentional efforts are needed to connect the men with ministries and leadership opportunities in accordance with their spiritual gifts.

Major Finding #2 – Many participants saw a significant increase in their participation in bible study and fellowship opportunities after attending the discipleship sessions at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church.

First Data Exemplar – In support of this finding when the men were asked the question on pre and post-test surveys “How engaged are you in prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship?”, their responses revealed that the project helped to encourage

increased engagement, especially when fellowship opportunities are presented outside of the church setting.

Second Data Exemplar – The Reflective Assessment Questions revealed participating in the project positively impacted the men’s understanding of the importance of participating in bible study and fellowship opportunities. The time of reflection led one participant to note “Indicators to show transformation through the discipleship process are shifts in attitudes, values, control of emotions, praying more, and studying the word.”

Third Data Exemplar – Participant journal entries reflected the men’s new-found emphasis on “How much more that we need to work on ourselves to become a better follower of Jesus and child of God.” and “Ways to better myself with Jesus model is to study the words of God and pray daily.”

Fourth Data Exemplar – The Spiritual Gifts Tests revealed gifts of Knowledge and Wisdom which will encourage the men to significantly increase their participation in bible study and fellowship opportunities.

Major Finding #3 – Participants grew a desire to take on leadership roles within the church that would help them to utilize their gifts in the service within the church and outreach to the community after attending the discipleship sessions at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church.

First Data Exemplar – In support of this finding when the men were asked the question on pre and post-test surveys “Do you have the desire to take on a leadership role within the church? their “Yes” responses revealed that the project helped to grow their

desire to take on leadership roles within the church that would help them to utilize their gifts in the service within the church and outreach to the community.

The number of “No” and “Unsure” responses confirmed the continued need for training, encouragement, and opportunity in the area of church leadership, as many of the men acknowledged demonstrating leadership skills outside of the church.

Second Data Exemplar – The Reflective Assessment Questions revealed participating in the project positively impacted the men’s growing desire to take on leadership roles within the church. The project allowed the men to gain a better understanding of these leadership roles as they discussed “What does it mean to be a leader who seeks transformation?” One participant noted “We can model the lessons of love, service, faith, obedience, and being humble by studying Jesus’s teachings in the bible and listening to the Holy Spirit daily. By working within the church and setting or leading by example, demonstrating integrity, listening to response from God, being still and open to teachings.”

Another participant noted “Someone who can motivate and move people but is also humble enough to realize the continuing need for growth. Having the ability to inspire, develop, and empower others also comes with knowing that you...yourself can still be done the same. Having the constant need to have a purpose, follow the Lord’s vision, have clear objectives, trusting others, and maintaining a strong core of values. While also respecting, empowering, being sympathetic to others.”

Third Data Exemplar – This project positively impacted the men in terms of their desire to take on leadership roles within the church that would help them to utilize their gifts in the service within the church and outreach to the community. Participant journal

entries on leadership and meeting the needs of the community reflected, “With a focus on compassion, servant leadership, and empowerment. Jesus’ leadership still remains a timeless example for leadership in all walks of life. Elevate those that are willing, make them feel accepted & while on their journey, let God continue to touch them & guide them & let the leaders of the church, with an abundance of grace, become mentors, or better servant leaders. Showing compassion and empathy to the people in the community by talking and witnessing to them. The biggest way is to provide a good reflection of Jesus. Listen, help, guide, and always be seeking a better understanding of how to be a helping hand to the community.”

One participant reflected on the need for leaders in the church to start new, more relevant, ministries such as the Young Adult Ministry, following up with the statement, “P.S. I am not volunteering to start up a young adult ministry. Don’t even know where to begin.” These opportunities will be explored further by this researcher.

Fourth Data Exemplar – The Spiritual Gifts Tests revealed gifts of Leadership, Administration, and Mercy which will encourage the men to grow a desire to take on leadership roles within the church. This will be facilitated by the continued guidance, encouragement, and opportunities initiated by this project.

My hypothesis was supported by this project by addressing the problem of the misinterpretation that Christian discipleship is achieved solely and immediately through church membership and relationships. This project confirmed that if believers gain a Biblical understanding of discipleship and the discipleship process, they will be more likely to engage and commit to continuing the work of discipleship for the cause of Christ. More specifically, the project confirmed that if the men of Loudon Avenue

Christian Church would participate in an intentional discipleship process, then they will experience spiritual growth and increase their engagement and participation in prayer, study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

## Conclusion

This project brought about much needed awareness in the Loudon Avenue Christian Church to develop a viable process to help members mature in their spiritual growth to become disciples of Jesus Christ. This researcher is excited about the opportunity to play a leading role in providing tools, techniques, and strategies to facilitate a paradigm shift that calls for the revitalization of Men's Ministry using an intentional discipleship process. This is due to the belief that making disciples is biblical in accordance with our commissioned assignment given by Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 which states, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Thus, there is a model that must first be established and adapted to create relational connectivity and covenant with one another on which the development of disciples can stand.

This project specifically highlighted and developed a solution to the problem at the Loudon Avenue Christian Church with most of leadership being women, presenting the following ministry concerns:

1. We were unable to engage with men in a setting outside of worship that allows for relationships to be built.

2. We were unable to develop new leaders.
3. Several women had expressed that there was a lack of men willing to step up to serve, especially during times of community outreach opportunities.
4. There was a lack of mentors for young people.
5. Perhaps the greatest concern is the lack of space to develop relational discipleship experiences that lead to spiritual growth.

This critical aspect of men, discipleship, and leadership in the church is supported by a Bible.org Men's Ministry blog entitled "Succeeding at Ministry to Men in the Local Church - Part III: Summary":<sup>3</sup>

Can you visualize what your church might "look like" if men of the church were no longer on the sidelines of spiritual life and leadership, but were actively applying their spiritual gifts to the ministries and mission of the church? How can you start or grow a vibrant Men's Ministry in your church that will attract the men? How can you get them to come?

Remember, some key steps in starting/growing a Men's Ministry are to: 1. Gather interested men, 2. Pray and plan with your pastor, 3. Select called leader(s), 4. Survey the men, 5. Schedule major events, 6. Communicate well, and 7. Trust God to deliver the men.

A well thought out, prayed over, and agreed upon Purpose Statement should be clearly communicated to all men of the church. Accordingly, when first forming, restarting, or revitalizing a Men's Ministry in the church, all men should be called to this ministry to simply join together to help each other to grow in Christ. We recommend that an invitation go out by a letter from the pastor to all men, with specifics from the Men's Ministry leader(s). The letter highlights the importance and key elements of the Men's Ministry and invites them to a special men's fellowship and kick-off meeting. The letter should be followed by a phone call by the Director and others to add a more personal touch and answer any questions.

Follow-up letters and flyers should announce your first monthly gathering. A Sunday service announcement and bulletin insert remind men of the meeting. Some of the letters to the men go to the heart of the commitment and involvement issues. Many men have reasons (and excuses) as to why they cannot participate. Every effort is made to answer each question concerning what the Men's Ministry

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<sup>3</sup> Bible.org, "Succeeding at Ministry to Men in the Local Church – Part III: Summary," <https://blogs.bible.org/succeeding-at-ministry-to-men-in-the-local-church-partiii-summary/>.

is and what it isn't, and to remove any and all obstacles preventing men from participating.

Subsequent growth is generated through "multiple entry points," like special dinners with a speaker, golf outings, fishing tournaments, Super Bowl parties, PK conference, regional rallies, mission fairs, construction projects, small groups, etc. If the new kickoff meeting is well planned, it will result in attendance immediately jumping. This group will continue to grow by using multiple entry points.

Men will come if they see the ministry is open to all men, and because it has been focused on the fundamental Christ-centered ingredients that godly men are seeking. These ingredients are essential to a responsive, vital ministry and fellowship of men. Remember the keys to starting and growing a Men's Ministry: Prayerfully select called leaders; have pastor and leaders pray for the men; call all men together to help each other grow in Christ; involve all men and their interests (multiple entry points); plan and communicate well, and trust God to grow the ministry! A survey of abilities and ministry interests can also be useful.

The researcher's project set-up and session preparation went very well. From sending out the initial invitations to the participants, the initial session explaining the design of the project, having participants fill out consent forms, and then administering the pre-test surveys. Because the project was held following Sunday morning worship services, this researcher had volunteers from the church provide a light snack for participants that ranged from finger sandwiches to pizza. Providing food, this researcher believe, is more than just something to do to solicit or satisfy participants. Food has a way of creating an atmosphere of family and fellowship which this researcher wanted to have for the conversations during each session to be organic and more meaningful.

The candidness of the participants also went better than expected. Sometimes as men, we get the tag of being shut off and closed to conversation. But the brothers opened up in the sessions as well in their journals.

Staying within the one-hour timeframe for each session was a bit of a struggle. More likely than not this was due to the dialogue that was sparked by the topics, teachings, or assessment questions and journal prompts. Collecting the data was a little

challenging. Mainly because the participants really got into the weekly process of answering questions and journal prompts and it took some a while to finish everything. Another thing that this researcher had to contend with was some participant's time away from the physical session. This researcher knew going into the project that there were a few guys who were excited about participating but had some previously scheduled dates for travel. So, there were only a few sessions that we had all participants in attendance, however, this researcher made all of the sessions available digitally and the participants were able to keep up with the journey. The difficulty for this researcher in implementing this project was the feeling of confinement and restlessness, facilitating all of the training sessions in the one physical location, inside of the church, as opposed to having some sessions outside of the church building, in less formal settings.

In the future, this researcher would divide the sessions where half of the participants would be in a formal setting at the church and half of the participants would be in an informal gathering space such as the fishing trip, around a fire pit, at a dinner table, etc. This researcher would also do a deeper dive with the Spiritual Gifts Assessment, guiding the participants to connect with a current ministry where their gifts can be utilized or, if possible, creating a ministry space where they could exercise their gifts, even in a leadership role.

It was evident that the project participants and wider context were positively impacted by this training experience. The participants shared that the project really allowed them to see discipleship in a new light as well as their personal spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. It helped them to consider their past experiences in church and life versus where they are now. It also moved some participants to want to learn more

about and be more open to engaging in their role as one of Christ's Disciples, thus enhancing the effectiveness of the Loudon Avenue Christian Church ministry as a whole.

This researcher dreams and prays for a stronger Men's Ministry to be developed from this project. Stronger not just in numbers, but in each man's commitment and devotion to God, prayer life, hunger for God's word, and desire to serve God. This researcher plans to connect with the participants again and ask for their feedback on how we can make what we did more fluid and flexible to fit in the context of our Men's Ministry on an ongoing basis.

This researcher is contemplating publishing this work, with the intent of positively impacting other church ministries, helping them to develop an intentional discipleship process for revitalizing Men's Ministry.

The researcher's project was developed out of the synergy of his spiritual autobiography, context analysis, and biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary foundations. The project was specifically born out of the researcher's challenge within the church of never having encountered or experienced an intentional process of being discipled, however, being organically developed through relationships, experiences, fellowship, worship, service, and other means. While an informal process has seen success in developing some disciples, the question becomes should we strive to be more intentionally responsible about the discipling process? How much more effective could the church be if there was a thought out, tested, fluid and proved process in place that is unique to our ministry contexts that is solely focused on discipleship growing instead of only membership assimilation?

The researcher acknowledges that while in the doctoral program, the work of pastoring no way got easier or slowed down. He faced numerous challenges in ministry from hiring and losing staff members, reimagining our vision and mission, engaging in the process of modernizing outdated policies, constitution and by-laws, facing certain cultural and societal issues, and guiding members through the realities of how they impact our faith and our service as the church, and so much more. All of this taught him to see every challenge as an opportunity to learn and grow as a faith leader.

Every one of the United Intensives that were offered as a part of the doctoral journey were very informative and spiritually impactful for the researcher. He can only attribute the amazement to God's divine planning and purpose. Every theme that was the focus of each Intensive spoke directly to his church's current state as the body of Christ. From discipleship, evangelism, cultural/societal issues and more, he walked away really feeling as though God had designed the week just for him. He felt refreshed, reenergized, revived, and ready to tackle issues, ready to dream, ready to envision and cast vision, ready to lead, and ready to be all that God had created and called him to be. The Intensives were the perfect kick-starter to each semester and fueled his drive to get back home and start researching, writing, and eventually implementing his project. He would say that the Intensives were a key component to the success of him as a student.

The researcher trusted the process of the United Theological Seminary and greatly appreciated the excellent guidance of his mentors and faculty, and thus, believes that his calling as a Doctor of the Church is to challenge churches to develop a reimagined and reenergized perspective of discipleship and a new process that would help to intentionally make disciples by guiding believers through a planned process.

It is essential that men in the church are encouraged to participate in a discipleship journey that results in them being actively engaged in the life of the church, becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, and making disciples of Jesus Christ. From this project, a discipleship process was implemented which can be replicated in other churches.

**APPENDIX A**  
**LOUDON AVENUE LESSON PLANS**

## LOUDON AVENUE LESSON PLANS

### **Week One Lesson Plan: Defining Disciples and Discipleship**

**A Disciple Is:** One who chooses to believe in Jesus, who is following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and is committed to learn and carry out the mission of Jesus while living their life for and like Jesus.

The term disciple or ‘making disciples’ is often interchanged with the word follower or creating followers. Both suggest movement and choice, which is an important distinction to make since disciples *take up their calling* and have a dynamic relationship with God.

Disciple Making involves entering into relationships to help people trust and follow Jesus for themselves (**Matt. 28:18–20**), which includes the whole process from conversion through maturation and multiplication.

**The Call to Discipleship:** The Bible defines it multiple times, but the most prominent definition is found in **Luke 14**. Here, Jesus shares The Cost of Discipleship as it states that a disciple is someone who has surrendered to Jesus Christ. They are also someone who loves the Lord and is wholly dedicated to Him.

\*The call to discipleship is simply a call to live by Christ’s standards rather than the standards of our world.

**The Characteristics of a Disciple:** The life of a disciple can look a million different ways. And yet, there are some portions of the Scriptures that give us clear direction for fulfilling our purpose and living like followers of Christ.

#### **1. Loves God Above Everything Else**

The first mark of a disciple, according to the Bible is that he or she loves for God above all else. Anything else—any ambition or relationship or goal or whatever—comes after that.

“But the first and greatest commandment is this: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.” The second is this: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” - Mark 12:29-31

## **2. Follows God's Will**

Another characteristic of a disciple is submitting his or her will to the will of God, with humility and obedience. We love Him, and what He wants for our lives and our world matters more than what we want.

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.’ Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who has aroused these for Me from the ends of the earth? Truly I have lived in the farthest [parts] of the world, But I have not seen [anything] like these, And so far no eye has seen a God besides You, And no ear has heard besides You, what God has prepared for those who trust and take refuge in Him.” – Isaiah 55:11-15

## **3. Submits to God's Word**

Ultimately, a true disciple of Christ must submit to God's Word, the Bible, since it is what He has given to his people to speak, to guide, to encourage, to teach, to correct, and to give hope. It reveals Him, His will, and all His great and precious promises. A disciple of Jesus submits to the Word of God to experience the true joyfulness found in Him.

“So then, my beloved brothers and sisters, be constantly on your guard while you are living in these last days. Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for you to be made aware of them by us, but do not let them make an end of your faith.” – 1 Timothy 4:1-2

## **4. Embraces Suffering**

A true disciple of Christ fully embraces suffering in order to follow the path God has laid out for them. Jesus Christ did just that, and since He is the model for disciples—the example we seek to follow and imitate.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him, we have access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.” – Romans 5:1-5

**Romans 12** is another key area in scripture where a disciple's character is highlighted. There are 5 additional principles of discipleship we can uncover., they would look like this:

1. A Christian disciple lives a life of surrender to God
2. A Christian disciple lives their life in sharp contrast with the world
3. A Christian disciple is sober in their personal self-assessment
4. A Christian disciple serves others in love
5. A Christian disciple supernaturally responds to evil with good

**10. A disciple of Jesus will bear much *good* fruit.** *8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.* John 15:8. Jesus says that you will show yourself to be my disciples when you bear *much* fruit. In fact, when we bear much fruit, we bring glory to our heavenly Father! So what kind of fruit is Jesus looking for and how can we produce it?

Fruit is a metaphor that is used often in the Bible to describe the fruit produced in our lives. The truth is that fruit can either be good or bad. A true disciple, surrendered and committed to Christ, will produce good fruit in their lives. Likewise a person who is not surrendered to Christ's leadership will produce bad fruit. (Galatians 5:19-20).

A true disciple of Jesus doesn't produce that kind of fruit. They produce the fruits of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-24). Those fruits affect all our behaviors... our thoughts, our words, our actions. We are fruitful when we are humble, compassionate and forgiving. We are also fruitful when we do *good work* for Christ's sake! When we serve in His name. (Ephesians 2:10)

Now, all of these qualities can be present in the lives of business professionals, stay-at-home parents, grocery store staff, teachers, students, and CEOs. The point is that a disciple's life is not his or her own. *They're fully committed to the ways of God and to fulfilling His purpose in their lives.*

Being a true disciple of Christ is not an easy task; it means setting aside your own agenda and plans for the greater work Jesus has for you. It may mean hardship and sacrifice. But it is also the way of joy and peace, purpose, hope, and eternal influence—a life you never imagined you could experience with Jesus Christ.

### **Week Two Lesson Plan: Giving Jesus Space In Your Boat**

#### **Luke 5:1-11**

**1** One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. **2** He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. **3** Stepping

into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.

**4** When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

**5** “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” **6** And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! **7** A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

**8** When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me—I’m such a sinful man.” **9** For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him. **10** His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on you’ll be fishing for people!”

**11** And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.

#### **Q. Why Is A Discipleship Process Needed?**

**A.** An effective discipleship process would involve the men of Loudon Avenue Christian Church participating in an intentional discipleship journey that would result in them experiencing spiritual growth and increasing their engagement and participation in study, worship, fellowship, and service within the church and community.

This scripture, **Luke 5:1-11**, shares the calling of Jesus’ First Disciples. This account in Luke’s gospel is a pivotal moment in the ministry life of Jesus Christ and serves as the inaugural calling of His disciples. It shows that one’s obedience to answer Christ’s call on their life, and to exhibit faith in Him can be the catalyst for the changing of one’s direction and identity in life.

Luke takes care to assure that Jesus is not only seen as a highly exalted Messiah and Messenger but also as the fully divine man that was sent to minister and show compassion to all people.

A that's the goal of disciples and discipleship, to take the message of Christ to ALL People.

So, This process of discipleship will expound on the following components of the original call of the original disciples as presented by Steve Murrell in his article entitled Responding to the Discipleship Call:

### **1. Corporate response.**

Jesus saw discipleship as a group project. Sometimes He called individuals, but usually He called small groups of people to follow Him. It seems that with our Western Evangelical emphasis on “accepting Jesus as personal savior” we often miss the corporate nature of Biblical Christianity. The New Testament pattern of evangelism and discipleship was generally a group effort. Consider the following accounts:

- An angel told Cornelius that Peter would preach a message through which you and all your household will be saved. (Acts 11:13)
- When Peter and Luke ministered in Philippi a businesswoman named Lydia, and all the members of her household were baptized.
- When Paul, Silas, and Timothy preached in Corinth, a synagogue ruler named Crispus and his entire household believed in the Lord.
- As Crispus began to testify, many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8) The message that saved whole households then will do the same today. As we make disciples we should expect a group response not just individual responses.

### **2. Urgent response.**

Peter and Andrew responded to the call to discipleship at once and James and John responded immediately. We have all seen small children stall when parents declare that it is now bedtime. Sometimes they pretend they did not hear, other times they negotiate for more play time. When Jesus calls us to follow, we should respond with urgency as His original disciples, not as small children who stall and negotiate.

### **3. Purposeful response.**

While they did not know exactly where they would go as they began to follow Jesus, they did know what they would be doing. They knew they would be fishing for men, not just randomly wandering from village to village. There was a clear purpose and task for the original twelve that still applies today to all who follow Jesus.

### **Sacrificial response.**

Peter and Andrew left their nets when they started following Jesus. James and John left the boat and their father to follow Jesus. All four of these men were fishermen.

Answering the call to discipleship cost these men their careers. They left nets, boats, and fishing partners behind. Not everyone is called to a career change, but everyone who follows Jesus must leave something behind. Obviously, we all must leave sinful habits, activities, and relationships behind. But we also may need to leave some things behind that are not evil or sinful.

### **Space in Your Boat/Life**

Peter allowing Jesus space in the boat to teach the crowds and following the command of Jesus to push out from the shore, thus submitting to his leadership, also highlights something else about our individual journeys with Christ. It was not just space in the boat that Jesus commandeered, but it was space in Peter's life. It was space to allow Jesus to be seen in not just his boat, but in his life. It was space that allowed Jesus to be heard not just from his boat but from a very significant place in his life. For a fisherman in that day and time just as it is now, your boat is an extension of who you are, it's how you make a living, it is important to your survival and being able to provide for your family and yourself. It is a place where you are socially connected with others. And for the man of today, it is equivalent to your corner office at work, your spot on the team roster, the passenger seat in your police cruiser, the seat on the couch in your mancave, the chair next to you at the barbershop. It is the spot standing around the grill with your neighbors, etc. It is there that, when we become disciples, we welcome Jesus into what is our own personal sacred space and allow Him to be seen and heard.

### **Week Three Lesson Plan: History of Ordinary Men**

#### **Luke 5:4-7**

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”

5 “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” 6 And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

**Q.** So, what does it mean to Be Called to Catch People?

**A.** It Means Being Obedient to Jesus to Get Results...Fish...Men!  
\*Obedience begins with humility!

**(Illustration - Aruba Fishing Experience...The Captain of the Boat did the planning, piloting, provided what was necessary for the day. Know this: YOU/WE ARE NOT THE CAPTAIN OF THIS SHIP...GOD IS!!!**

At best we are the first mate. The first mate was the one who welcomed us on the boat, gave us instructions/directions, set up the fishing rods, put the bait on the hook, cast them in the water, told us when there was a fish on the line, guided us in how to pull them in, encouraged us, and in the end we thanked him for his much needed help in the process of fishing.

That’s what Jesus is to us and does for us and that’s what and who we should become to others as we disciple them to be fishers of men or fulfill their kingdom call/assignment.

Here’s what Peter learned, and I hope that we and every person who seeks discipleship will learn, there are certain qualities that every disciple needs to have if you are going to engage in the work of people catching and disciple making.

- 1. Obedience** - (he said: “But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.”) While he didn’t understand Jesus’ instructions, and His instructions went against what Peter knew about fishing which was sometimes the fish just aren’t where you are. And it went against what he knew about himself which was he was tired from fishing all night long, he was still obedient to do what Jesus said do. You will not always understand/get what Jesus is saying do...but you have to trust that Jesus knows what He’s doing so all you have to do is be obedient.

**2. Commitment** - ("their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7 they had to yell for help from their friends, James and John, in their boat,) Listen, they weren't expecting such an abundant catch or maybe any catch at all, they didn't plan for it, they didn't really have to work hard for it, but yet just when his obedience was beginning to pay off with what was probably the largest catch of his life...he realized something: he couldn't Handle it on his own.

Peter could've just let them go for the sake of my nets tearing, but instead he stayed committed to the catch by being humble enough to know that he needed some help!

What we need to know as growing disciples and those who will disciple others, as you seek to catch people and win souls for Christ, lead the lost to God, there will be times when you feel unequipped to handle the catch, and too weak to complete the assignment, and when that is the case don't give up on the work, don't quit, just be humble enough to call for help!

Help from another brother who can aid you in your walk, call, assignment.

No it will not always be easy, you will get tired, you will feel weak, you will be tested, but whatever you do, stay committed! You have no idea the lives that will be won, changed, turned around, set free, etc. if you just stay committed.

### **Not So Ordinary...**

The idea that Jesus only used the poor, uneducated, and ordinary, to be disciples is founded in **Acts 4:13**: "When [the religious leaders] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished".

This verse refers to Peter and John and more than likely had more to do with their lack of religious training than anything else, over the years this description has been applied to the disciples as a whole. Nothing could be further from the truth.

### **Reflective Assessment Questions:**

1. In what ways do you see a need for Christ's Impact on Community Issues?
2. How could the work of discipleship make an impact in our community today?  
Explain

### **Introduction to Journal Assignments - 10 minutes**

**Daily Journal Focus:** Throughout this week, intentionally consider and list ways a that men who are Disciples of Jesus Christ could meet the needs of the community?

### **Week Four Lesson Plan: Defining Disciples and Discipleship**

#### **Session 4 Lesson - What Did Jesus Do? - 35 minutes**

Jesus' method of disciple making is about connecting with people in a relational, personal way—the way of cross-shaped love. It is a life-on-life environment, heart-to-heart centered, and obedience focused. It is motivated by love, fueled by the Holy Spirit, and the result is dramatic transformation.

His Method begins with two words that permeate throughout the entire process...**Follow Me!**

### **When Addressing The Rich Man...**

**Luke 18:18** Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: “Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

**19** “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “Only God is truly good. **20** But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.’”

**21** The man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”

**22** When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. **Then come, follow me.**”

### **After Predicting His Death...**

**Matthew 16:24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, **take up your cross, and follow me.** **25** If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. **26** And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?

### **Mark’s Account of The First Disciples being Called...**

#### **The First Disciples**

**Mark 1:16** One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living.

**17** Jesus called out to them, “**Come, follow me**, and I will show you how to fish for people!” **18** And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Discipleship then was to be taught through the witness of behavior.

He didn’t say go read a book, go sit in a classroom, listen to a TED Talk, etc. He said Follow Me, and I’ll show you! That was His method then and it should be our method today. Follow Me through life and I’ll show you how to catch the hearts and souls of men and women, follow me through life and I’ll show you how to be a disciple in good times and bad times, when everything is alright and when things are all wrong, etc.

Jesus’ method shows us that disciples are handcrafted, one life at a time, not mass-produced in a weekly church service or class.

Don’t miss this – disciples are hand crafted, not mass produced.

Remember earlier we defined a disciple as someone who is “following Jesus, being changed by Jesus and is committed to the mission of Jesus” (Matthew 4:19).

**Q.** How did Jesus make this kind of disciple?

**A.** He was...

6.     **Intentional:** Jesus was deliberate and guided by a master plan.

3.     **Relational:** Jesus was personally engaged, guided by a cross-shaped love for people (John 13:34–35). **34** So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. **35** Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

- **Formation:** Jesus formed his disciples by teaching, coaching, challenging, and so they could become more and more like him, ultimately spending 65 to 90 percent of their time making disciples just as Jesus did.

**Q. Where To Start?**

**A. Pray!!!**

Intentionally Get To Know The Model...Jesus!

Strive to Live The Model...Daily

Share The Model/Your Boat/Your Life...And as a Result Share Jesus.

### **Week Five Lesson Plan: Defining Disciples and Discipleship**

**Session 5 Lesson - Transformers!!! - 25 minutes**

**Focusing Quote:** *It takes a changing life to change a life. -Joe Stowell*

#### **Luke 5:9-11**

**9** For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken,  
**10** and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” **11** So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Transformational leaders help people understand the purpose, objectives and values of an organization by articulating a clear and appealing vision. From both a practical and biblical perspective, transformational leadership inspires, develops and empowers followers; it also hones our leadership skills, so we become better leaders.

There is no greater example of a transformational leader than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. During His mission on earth, Jesus provided a powerful model to follow of transformational leadership. His loving obedience to the Father and abundant love for His followers is clear, “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). When we emulate Jesus’ leadership, we become more like Him.

Regardless of one’s religious beliefs, the leadership style of Jesus stands out as a model of excellence. With a focus on compassion, servant leadership, and empowerment, Jesus’s leadership style remains a timeless example for leaders in all walks of life.

**7.     Compassion and Empathy:** At the core of Jesus’s leadership style was His unwavering compassion and empathy towards others. He demonstrated a deep

understanding of human nature and a genuine concern for the well-being of those He encountered. Jesus connected with people on an emotional level, embracing their struggles and offering solace and support. His ability to empathize created a strong sense of trust and rapport, fostering an environment where individuals felt valued and understood.

**4. Servant Leadership:** Jesus's leadership was characterized by His humility and selflessness. He exemplified the concept of servant leadership by prioritizing the needs of others above His own. He willingly took on the role of a servant, washing the feet of His disciples and teaching them the importance of humility and sacrifice. By leading through service, Jesus set an example of how true leaders should prioritize the growth and development of their followers, ensuring their success and well-being.

- **Inspirational Vision:** Jesus had a profound vision that inspired and motivated His followers. He envisioned a world of love, justice, and compassion, and He conveyed this vision through His teachings and actions. Jesus's messages resonated deeply with His audience, as He painted a vivid picture of a better future and inspired others to embrace it. He encouraged His disciples to strive for greatness, inspiring them to become better versions of themselves and to positively impact the world around them.

**4. Empowerment and Trust:** Jesus empowered His disciples and entrusted them with responsibilities. He believed in their potential and provided them with opportunities to grow and develop their skills. Jesus saw the value in allowing others to take ownership and make decisions, fostering a sense of empowerment and accountability among His followers. By placing trust in His disciples, He enabled them to become leaders in their own right, ensuring the longevity of His mission beyond His physical presence.

**5. Leading by Example:** Perhaps the most powerful aspect of Jesus's leadership was His ability to lead by example. He lived in accordance with His teachings, demonstrating integrity, compassion, and love in every aspect of His life. His actions spoke louder than words, and He inspired others through His unwavering commitment to His values. Jesus's authenticity and consistency were key factors in building trust and loyalty among His followers, making His leadership highly effective.

### **Week Six Lesson Plan: The Disciples Work!**

**Session 6 Lesson - The Disciple's Work! - 25 minutes**

**John 21:15-17 (Our Obligation of Love)**

**15** After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.”

“Then feed my lambs,” Jesus told him.

**16** Jesus repeated the question: “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

“Yes, Lord,” Peter said, “you know I love you.”

“Then take care of my sheep,” Jesus said.

**17** A third time he asked him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt that Jesus asked the question a third time. He said, “Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Then feed my sheep.

**First**, we must follow Jesus in seeking the salvation of men (evangelism).

**Second**, we must shepherd the souls of those who are saved (pastoring, shepherding).

#### **Matthew 28:16-20 (The Great Commission)**

**16** Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **17** When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

**18** Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. **19** Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. **20** Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Further, while our Lord commands every disciple to follow Him in seeking and shepherding the souls of men, He wants us to know that our individual paths may differ. (**Illustration - X-Men!** Different Paths, Gifts, Training, Use, Impact...But One Team and One Goal!)

\*It is not the disciple's concern to trouble himself about the individual calling of other disciples. That is a matter between a disciple and his Lord.

**APPENDIX B**  
**LOUDON AVENUE PRE-TEST SURVEY**

**LOUDON AVENUE PRE-TEST SURVEY**

1. What is a disciple?
2. How would you define discipleship?
3. Do you consider yourself a disciple? Why or Why Not?
4. How would you describe yourself before you met Jesus Christ?
5. Where/How did you meet Jesus Christ?
6. What has changed since you met Jesus?
7. How engaged are you in Prayer, Bible Study, and Christian Fellowship?
8. Do you have the desire to increase your engagement in Prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship?
9. Do you know what your spiritual gift is?
10. Have you ever led someone to Christ?
11. Do you feel equipped to lead others to Christ?
12. Do you consider yourself a leader?

Do you have the desire to take on a leadership role within the church?

**APPENDIX C**  
**LOUDON AVENUE POST-TEST SURVEY**

**LOUDON AVENUE POST-TEST SURVEY**

1. What is a disciple?
2. How would you define discipleship?
3. Do you consider yourself a disciple? Why or Why Not?
4. How would you describe yourself before you met Jesus Christ?
5. Where/How did you meet Jesus Christ?
6. What has changed since you met Jesus?
7. How engaged are you in Prayer, Bible Study, and Christian Fellowship?
8. Do you have the desire to increase your engagement in Prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship?
9. Do you know what your spiritual gift is?
10. Have you ever led someone to Christ?
11. Do you feel equipped to lead others to Christ?
12. Do you consider yourself a leader?

Do you have the desire to take on a leadership role within the church?

**APPENDIX D**

**PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SURVEY RESULTS**

## PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SURVEY RESULTS

<b>Pre and Post Test Survey Questions</b>	<b>Pre-Test Survey Results</b>	<b>Post-Test Survey Results</b>
1. What is a disciple?	A believer and follower of Jesus Christ. Someone who believes in the work of Jesus Christ and everyday strives to build people. One who emulate Christ. Someone that God works through to spread his word. Person who shares and has studied gospel of God, the Bible. A committed leader in church. Spreads the word of Christ.	A person who is committed to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ. A believer who follows the Word of God. Someone who follows the Lord. A person who not only knows about the teachings of Jesus but incorporates them into his or her own life. Someone that spreads the teachings of Christ in different ways. A person that not only follows Christ but lives Christ-like life. A person that tries to guide people to God's Kingdom through actions and words. Someone willing to humble themselves as a leader and assist others in learning more about the teachings of God. One who is willing to follow the vision of Jesus Christ and serve as a leader (fisher) of followers to His vision as well. He/she must submit to this and be a servant leader to others. A follower of Jesus.
2. How would you define discipleship?	The act of spreading the word of Christ. Creating other followers of Christ through both living and purposeful teaching, whether that be song, dance, word, giving, etc. Taking what you have learned, been taught, to others that you interact with daily, Acts 1-8. Go Out! Exemplifying what it looks like to walk in His light. The way you live your life. Humbly trying daily to be like Christ. Follow God's word	The act of doing what Jesus would do. Leading others, as you have been led to submit to the will of the Lord. An ongoing growth journey for men and women that believe in the teachings of God and through many different avenues are willing and compelled to share His teachings with others. Living a God-purpose life, using your God-given gift to bring people to Christ. Spreading the word of Christ to others who are in need or need help finding their way.

	<p>and teaching through words and actions to others.</p> <p>Dedicated to act and live as Jesus did and witness.</p> <p>Witnessing to others.</p> <p>Community service/truth speaking/doing God's work.</p> <p>A person totally "sold out" to do the work of Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>Following Jesus so much that when people meet you or greet you, they see the light of Christ in you. Fellow men getting together and praying with the Lord. Your daily spiritual walk; Are you spreading the Word, spreading love through your actions as a reflection of Jesus? Loves God above everything else, follows God's will, and submits to God's word.</p>
3. Do you consider yourself a disciple? Why or Why Not?	<p>Yes – 8</p> <p>No – 1</p> <p>Unsure – 3</p>	<p>Yes – 4</p> <p>No – 1</p> <p>Unsure - 4</p>
4. How would you describe yourself before you met Jesus Christ?	<p>Don't remember. Unsure.</p> <p>Young, so don't remember. A person who was unaware of God's goodness and grace. As a kid just going to church because I had to. A person of the material world. I was just drifting along. Very confused. Lost and searching for male leadership and wisdom to get through this life. Very independent. Very observant.</p>	<p>Cautious, Observant. Afraid to open up to people, more territorial. A humble man thinking about God. Just doing my own thing and going with the flow. I don't know myself without Him, He's always been there. I relied on my own understanding and knowledge to figure everything out. I would say that it was good or bad luck, depending on the outcome. My actions during the week did not match my belief and teachings of God. A child. I can't remember, I met Jesus when I was 6 or 7.</p>
5. Where/How did you meet Jesus Christ?	<p>Grew up in a Pentecostal Church. When my dad had a heart attack and recovered, then my mom was in the hospital battling cancer and pneumonia and recovered. When I was baptized. My father was a minister, teachers at school. In church with my parents and grandmother. As a child through my grandmother. Growing up I was always involved and around Jesus. At home through my mother. Members</p>	<p>At my parents' church. I can't remember, I was born in a Christian home, went to Christian school through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In 1967 through the teachings from Reverend and the discipleship of family and community; heard a sermon during revival which touched on the abuse, non-use of gifts given by God and those gifts destroyed by the world. I was at the church I grew up in and I decided to give my life over to Christ. When I became baptized in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In church as a</p>

	of the church and mother, father, Sunday School. He has always been there for me. At church.	youngster. Loudon Avenue Christian Church. In church.
6. What has changed since you met Jesus?	I try to listen to Jesus more when he talks to me. He has put me through several trials and I have changed through growth. The Holy Spirit is consistently talking with me. Recognizing the blessings in my life. I have more joy. My faith and beliefs have gotten stronger and I feel his presence when I need him most. I've been humbled and challenged in my walk with God to become a better all around man. My intentions. I hope that people see Christ in me. Compassionate, patient, observant. I strongly believe in prayer and that it changes things in our lives. I try to show the love of Jesus to everyone. More compassionate.	Everything. More compassionate and more open minded. Growing in spiritual life. My walk is different. As I have gotten older, I have understood Him more. I recognize God's hand in everything that happens in my life. I changed the way I present myself to others and in public. I enthusiastically invited others to participate in spreading the gospel of God. My personal trust in His plan and love for me. Specifically, that my pains have put me in a place to share uncommon perspectives when presented to me. This has been a change as I used to stop at "why me Lord?" My outlook on things.
7. How engaged are you in Prayer, Bible Study, and Christian Fellowship?	Very engaged in prayer and the reading of God's word daily. I have room to be better and grow in all phases. Joined a devotional group via Zoom. Pray every day and working on getting my schedule straight. Very much involved. Not enough. Prayer (daily), Bible Study (no), Christian Fellowship (on Sundays). Very engaged. Weekly. It's hard to find a bible study community that I enjoy and gain insight, so I study on my own and ask questions when I get confused or want clarity. Prayer (daily), Bible Study (infrequently), Christian	Just a little. Prayer-quite often; Bible study-formally never, in the home occasionally; Christian Fellowship-attending and joining a church has been a significant step for me as I had formally committed to never attending church again; Fellowship outside of church I enjoy tremendously. Not as much as I would like. My prayer life is slacking; I have picked up on my Bible study, daily and in groups; I have been more active in my church. Could be more engaged; I attend a weekly prayer group. I am engaged in all 3. I pray multiple times a day, attend church 3-4 times per month. I pray but my

	Fellowship (regularly). Heavily into prayer and fellowship, but not much Bible study.	participation in Bible Study and Christian Fellowship are nonexistent. Somewhat engaged.
8. Do you have the desire to increase your engagement in Prayer, Bible study, and Christian fellowship?	Yes – 11 No – 1	Yes – 8 No – 1
9. Do you know what your spiritual gift is?	Yes – 10 No – 2	Yes – 6 No – 3
10. Have you ever led someone to Christ?	Yes – 4 No – 1 Unsure – 7	Yes – 4 No – 2 Unsure – 3
11. Do you feel equipped to lead others to Christ?	Yes – 4 No – 1 Unsure – 8	Yes – 3 No – 3 Unsure – 2
12. Do you consider yourself a leader?	Yes – 8, 1 (but reluctant) No – 2 Unsure – 0	Yes – 5 No – 1 Unsure – 0
13. Do you have the desire to take on a leadership role within the church?	Yes – 4 No – 3 Unsure – 4, 1 (I hate the politics in the church.)	Yes – 5 No – 2 Unsure – 2

**APPENDIX E**

**LOUDON AVENUE REFLECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

## **LOUDON AVENUE REFLECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

### **Session 1 Reflective Assessment - The Definition of a Disciple and Discipleship**

1. Where can we find exemplified characteristics of a disciple of Christ in the Bible?
2. What are at least 3 must-have characteristics of a disciple? Explain.
3. What are characteristics that should not exist in discipleship?

### **Session 2 Reflective Assessment - Giving Jesus Space in Your Boat! (Biblical Lens)**

1. Is Jesus' presence visible in every aspect of your life?
2. Should any aspect of our life be void of Jesus?
3. What does one sacrifice by giving Jesus space in their lives?

### **Session 3 Reflective Assessment - YMCA!!! (Historical Lens)**

1. In what ways do you see a need for Christ's impact on community issues?
2. How could becoming/being a disciple make an impact in our community? Explain.

### **Session 4 Reflective Assessment - What Did Jesus Do? (Theological Lens)**

1. How did Jesus model the lifestyle to follow for disciples?
2. In what ways can we model discipleship in our daily lives?

### **Session 5 Reflective Assessment - Transformers! (Interdisciplinary Lens)**

1. What does it mean to be a leader who seeks transformation?
2. How can we possibly track transformation through a discipleship process? (What indicators will show that transformation is taking and /or has taken place?)

**Session 6 Reflective Assessment - The Disciple's Work!**

1. How can you put your spiritual gift into action in your life?
2. How can you put your spiritual gift into action in the life of the church?
3. How can you optimize the highest Kingdom use of your spiritual gift within church ministry?

**APPENDIX F**

**LOUDON AVENUE REFLECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

## DATA FROM REFLECTIVE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

### \*Session 1 Reflective Assessment - The Definition of a Disciple and Discipleship

#### **1. Where can we find exemplified characteristics of a disciple of Christ in the Bible?**

P1: Mark 12:29-31, Isaiah 55: 11-15, I Timothy 4:1-2

P2: Jesus explained one of the characteristics of a disciple in Mark 10:43 “But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant.” Another example is in Luke 10 when Jesus told 72 other disciples to go out and spread his word.

P3: Romans 12:2-3, Luke 14: 25-26, John 21: 24-25, Matthew 10:1-4, Galatians 5:22

P5: Peter, John and James

P7: Job showed great endurance through all kinds of trials, annoyances, and provocations, while also keeping his faith and never renouncing God. Jesus “Himself” is the main example of discipleship. Moses led God’s people through the wilderness and towards the promised land. Even along the way God’s people doubted, complained, and often came close to giving up, but God heard their cries and answered them. Relationship examples: Paul and Titus; Moses and Joshua; Eli and Samuel; Elijah and Elisha

P10: John the Baptist exemplified all the characteristics of disciple of Christ. Bringing people to God: JTB was spreading the word of repentance and giving your life to God. Living a life that is different (not worldly): JTB lived a different kind of life, His clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, he wore a belt made of leather around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey, he was differently special. Not making it about you: JTB knew he was just the announcer of the coming of Christ, the Messiah, he knew his purpose.

P11: I experienced discipleship today when I was at home going service of Edgar Alan Whitlock. Strength was shown through love displayed by the family with one another and for their father. It was also displayed in the comments of his daughter of Elder Whitlock’s commitment to teaching the word, fellowship of the family and friends, as well as his devotion to studying the word and prayer with friends and family. Showing through example his devotion, the characteristics that will help himself & others grow in faith. Acts 2:42.

#### **2. What are at least 3 must-have characteristics of a disciple? Explain.**

P1: 1) Loves God above everything else 2) Follows God’s will 3) Submits to God’s Word

P2: First you must have the love of God in your heart in order to spread the word of God. Then you must follow his will. Lastly, endure suffering as not everyone will be receptive

to the Word of God because of their own internal demons so you have to be willing to sacrifice.

P3: Submit to God's word. Follow God's will. Embrace suffering. In love with God above all things. Disciple of Jesus will bear much good fruit.

P5: Patience, Life submitted to God's will, Embracing God in others

P7: In love with God., patience, kindness, embraces suffering, seeking knowledge, forgiveness, humbleness, honoring thy Word, love, wisdom, honesty, etc.

P9: Loving God above everything else. Submitting to God's will. Embracing suffering.

### **3. What are characteristics that should not exist in discipleship?**

P1: 1) Produces bad fruit 2) Does not serve others in love

P2: Judgement should not exist in discipleship. Untrustworthiness and selfishness should also not exist.

P5: Selfishness, greed, and dishonesty

P7: Pride, envy, willful disobedience, hate, being fleshly and carnal, unforgiving, greed, dishonesty, disrespecting, etc.

P10: 1) Laziness: You must be about God's work. It can't wait until you get to it. 2) Untrustworthy: You should keep your word. 3) Arrogance: It is not about you. It's about spreading the word of God.

## **\*Session 2 Reflective Assessment - Giving Jesus Space in Your Boat! (Biblical Lens)**

### **1. Is Jesus' presence visible in every aspect of your life?**

P1: No. As Paul started "We are all a work in progress".

P2: Yes, by the way I communicate and treat people. I always try to spread love and joy in the world and try to find the positive in things. I believe God is more present in my actions than my words.

P3: No, but I feel that I'm reaching for that goal and placing myself around Godly people by being part of a weekly devotional group called Godzmen Ministry and I meet with another group as well that a friend of mine brought me to through Zoom and their church is located in New York.

P4: Yes, it is God, church, family, friends, neighbors.

P5: No

P7: I try to have Jesus in every aspect of my life but my marriage has been the most challenging. In my work life, it has allowed me to find, meet, and communicate with like-minded men about not only Jesus, but about similar life problems. In my family life, Jesus has helped me reconnect and become closer to family members and friends. In my marriage, however, following Jesus' teachings has just led me to more hardship and possibly even divorce.

P9: Yes, I think he is with me everywhere I go.

P10: No

## **2. Should any aspect of our life be void of Jesus?**

P1: No

P2: No, if you have the true love of Jesus in your heart you should want him in every aspect of your life.

P3: No, because he didn't keep his life void from anyone and did what he could to help them no matter who they were or what status they had in life and we as a people should be the same.

P4: No, without Jesus we can do nothing.

P5: No

P7: No. Jesus has helped me in every aspect of my life...even before I became a follower. Once again, my marriage is the only area in my life where Jesus hasn't made a profound impact/influence that has led to a more positive outcome.

P9: No.

P10: No. I know Jesus should be in every aspect of my life, but I know he's not. At one time of my life I was more intentional in my praying, praising, reading the Bible, Bible Study, tithing, attending church, praying with my children before they went to school, praying with my wife, and volunteering. I had some losses in my life: My mother in 04, my father in 07, my father-in-law in 08, my mother-in-law in 09. I started to shut Jesus out of parts of my life.

## **3. What does one sacrifice by giving Jesus space in their lives?**

P1: You may need to leave some things behind that are not evil or sinful.

P2: Friends, opportunities, your feelings, your sanity, your time are sacrificed to give Jesus space in your life.

P3: I feel like you wouldn't have to sacrifice anything but you would gain a lot bringing him in.

P4: Happiness, Peace, Follower

P5: A person sacrifices personal pleasure because the flesh is a cruel taskmaster.

P7: It could be friends, family, old/new habits, or behaviors. It can lead you to great joy, but also put you through great pain. The hardest part is trying to discern whether Jesus is telling you to sacrifice someone/somebody or to try harder.

P9: Sometimes it could affect the relationships you make with people. Some people won't understand/like that you are a believer.

P10: Time, money, and one self

### **\*Session 3 Reflective Assessment - YMCA!!! (Historical Lens)**

#### **1. In what ways do you see a need for Christ's impact on community issues?**

P1: "Christ's love and compassion for others."

P2: We need Christ back in the homes. Parents, mothers, fathers, grandparents have to start teaching and speaking LOVE back into these kids. There is so much hate, envy & venom taught to the kids in the home. It's spreading. Entertainment, social media, etc. needs a frequency change. Our community leaders have to continue to promote change and positive energy. We need younger community leaders who are more relatable to today's kids. We have to get back to that community mindset where we looked out for one another. And we have to accept accountability.

P3: I see a lot of need because this community in Roanoke is really hurting due to drugs and violence of all kinds and the youth are steering away because of the things around them.

P4: If the community had Christ, on gun violence there would not be any shooting of one another. The drug and or addiction could harden them from Christ. The theft is the same. Keep praying every day.

P5: Jesus always championed the excluded.

P7: Christ' teachings would have impacts on so many of our community/everyday issues. Our acceptance and forgiveness in/for one another. Our willingness to listen to each other, be slow to speak, be humble, willing to compromise, be slow to anger, understand you don't get everything your way, and trust that God will work it out in the end. Accepting everyone more equally and trying to find more ways to come together/meet each other in the middle for the better good. Christ's impact isn't just needed on

community issues, because it passes over into emotional, personal, social, religious, etc...issues as well.

P9: We need people in charge to start thinking about other people besides themselves. See the bigger issue. See other people' POU.

P10: Homelessness, Hunger, Mental Health, Crime, and Healthcare

**2. How could becoming/being a disciple make an impact in our community? Explain.**

P1: To show the love of Jesus and to be obedient and committed.

P2: It can make a major impact. First you have the right individuals in place who will stand 10 toes down to the calling of God and for the betterment of the community. We need individuals spreading love, trust – positive vibes/energy.

P3: By having different community events that will attract people within the area and showing them that they can be themselves without judgment.

P5: If the largest congregation in a community would band together, we could make a difference with the issues that plague us.

P7: Well discipleship in the community pretty much equals being everyone's brother or sister/best friend...all while being under the watchful eye and being obedient to the wishes of the same parent...our Father God. It's pretty much a run on to how I responded on question 1. How Christ could impact the community, so can we...if we're truly striving to be more like Christ daily. Then, let Jesus guide the ship.

P9: It could help out people in bad situations.

P10: By coming together with liked purpose and drive people. By getting together with people from all over the Roanoke Valley who are purpose driven and are in agreement with what is needed and how to impact these issues in a Christ liked way.

**\*Session 4 Reflective Assessment - What Did Jesus Do? (Theological Lens)**

**1. How did Jesus model the lifestyle to follow for disciples?**

P1: You must give up your own way and follow Jesus.

P2: Jesus' model for discipleship centered on love, humility, compassion, service, and prayer. Jesus strived to follow these teachings to model the lifestyles.

P4: Taught them the Lord's Prayer. Taught them compassion and love.

P5: Jesus kept it simple so He could focus on what really mattered.

P7: Just by doing. Just asking them to give up their ways and follow Him. Just through Christ's words and behavior. Going against the grain and society's norms. Connecting with others on a personal level.

P9: Taught lessons. Prayed for them, ate with them, walked with them, etc. While he was with them he showed them what it meant to love God and become a follower.

P10: A disciple should know their purpose. Jesus knew his purpose from an early age. Luke 2:49 "Didn't you know that I must be about my Father's business?" Once you know your purpose you are responsible for carrying it out in an intentional way. If it's Leadership: Jesus didn't say go here and study this book, Matthew 4:19 "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people". As a leader you should lead in a way that reflects Jesus teachings; Patience, understanding, merciful, kind, and compassionate. Sacrifice: Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice. We as disciples need to sacrifice ourself to God's purpose and will. As disciples it has to be God's will, not ours. Matt. 26:42 "My Father! If this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, your will be done". We must diminish ourself so more of the Jesus in our life can be seen. Reflection: Your living should be a reflection of the Jesus in you. You should try to live in a way that it's not only what you say, but it is what you do.

P11: By teaching love, humbling himself, and showing disciples how to live a life of service to others.

## **2. In what ways can we model discipleship in our daily lives?**

P1: Disciples are handcrafted. Be an example by the witness of our behavior.

P2: Practicing forgiveness is an area in my daily actions. I'll forgive but I hold grudges. I truly enjoy showing love and serving others. It brings me joy to serve others and help those individuals reach their goals.

P4: Love our neighbors. Be good and help our neighbors. Praying every day for family and everybody. We can follow the model Jesus uses by obeying our parents.

P5: Teach what Jesus taught and ask questions that Jesus asked.

P7: By approaching life with the same mindset and way Jesus did. In the words we choose, our behavior, and in how we handle any given situation. Listening and putting ourselves in others' "shoes". Being humble and wanting to understand. Realizing we don't have all the answers, need help, and go to God for guidance.

P9: We can follow and lead by example. If we have been through something a person we may or may not know could be helped knowing that we made it through with God's help. And God can help them through also. We can be there for them if they need it.

P10: By showing kindness, patience, compassion, mercy, gratefulness, and understanding at home, work, with strangers and friends.

P11: We can model the lessons of love, service, faith, obedience, and being humble by studying Jesus's teachings in the bible and listening to the Holy Spirit daily. By working within the church and setting or leading by example, demonstrating integrity, listening to response from God, being still and open to teachings.

### **\*Session 5 Reflective Assessment - Transformers! (Interdisciplinary Lens)**

#### **1. What does it mean to be a leader who seeks transformation?**

P1: To inspire, develop and empower followers.

P2: To be a leader who seeks transformation has several levels, such as personal growth, vision, and the ability to build relationships. Being a leader means actively working towards creating a positive impact on those who choose to follow.

P3: As I mentioned before when Jesus was first meeting the people who would become his disciples, they all had their issues and Jesus helped all of them in their own ways for one goal and one purpose.

P4: Transformational leaders help people understand the purpose, objective, and values of an organization by articulating a clear and appealing vision. Transformational leadership inspires, develops and empowers followers.

P5: A transformational leader inspires and encourages.

P7: Someone who can motivate and move people but is also humble enough to realize the continuing need for growth. Having the ability to inspire, develop, and empower others also comes with knowing that you...yourself can still be done the same. Having the constant need to have a purpose, follow the Lord's vision, have clear objectives, trusting others, and maintaining a strong core of values. While also respecting, empowering, being sympathetic to others.

P9: I think that if your goal is for transformation you need to expect failure...some things don't happen overnight. Things take time. You need to have patience...Even if things don't turn out the way you expected, you should be happy with the small changes.

P10: I guess you have to make sure as a leader you seek GOD'S guidance in your everyday life. You should read your Bible every day and pray every day. You need to reevaluate yourself often to make sure you are doing GOD'S will and not yours.

P11: Like Jesus - Compassionate & Empathy; Deep understanding of human nature; Connected on emotional level; Servant leader; Inspirational vision; Empowered & entrusted to make decisions; Lead by example. Looking inward to deepen relationship with God. Embracing God's love & grace. Committed to working with others in the community to help guide them that are willing & help them grow spiritually.

**2. How can we possibly track transformation through a discipleship process?  
(What indicators will show that transformation is taking and /or has taken place?)**

P1: Connecting with people on an emotional level. Lead by example.

P2: Indicators to show transformation are in process are shift in attitudes, values, control of emotions, praying more, and studying the word.

P3: The way the person acts and their involvement in the things around them and their knowledge. You can also think about where they were when you first met them and how their energy is more positive.

P4: When we emulate Jesus' leadership we become like him.

P5: By teaching the fundamentals of truth and by equipping and empowering.

P7: From a person's spirit, acts, words, and character. From how others treat them (listening, following, etc.), and how they treat others. Are they responding to situations, society, and themselves in a way that Jesus showed us to? Has his love for God and Jesus's teachings increased? Are you seeing a renewed spirit in his words, actions, and life? Does he walk with more patience, kindness, and overall understanding?

P9: I think we could possibly track it through the attendance at church related activities. Like for an example, when this project is over maybe the number of disciples will increase. I think that would be a great display of transformation.

P10: The only way to track any change is to reevaluate your words action, interaction with others. We need to recognize the changes in our life and the things that we still need to change. We need to be honest with ourself and to know it is and should be a constant and everyday ongoing transformation. We should know that there is something we have been slacking on: prayer, Bible Study, or being a good person. When I was reading my Bible every day and praying every day, my life had more JOY. I could tell that my life was different. Along with prayer and reading my Bible, I was working out every day, I was eating right for my body. I lost

about 45 lbs, I was jogging about 6 to 7 miles every other day. Riding my bike about 15-20 miles on the days I didn't jog. I got to the point where I rode my bike 30 miles and jog 7 miles on the same day. I was able to do that twice before my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. So my mind,

body, and soul was transformed. I recognize that I have work to do, and the benefits of the transformation.

P11: Through a spiritual gifts assessment baseline & then retaking the assessment later after a time of study. Documenting our emphasis on or in our prayer life, Bible study. Tracking our involvement with volunteering & service to others. Setting up a LACC mentorship program or develop an Alcoholics Anonymous model discussion for those that want to transform & are struggling. Have them/us share struggles, experiences & successes. A Disciples Support Group. 😊

### **\*Session 6 Reflective Assessment - The Disciple's Work!**

#### **1. How can you put your spiritual gift into action in your life?**

P1: By being an example and always show the love of Jesus.

P2: One of my gifts that ranked high is prophecy which I believe is like foresight – the ability to believe or predict an outcome. As a coach, I see the outcomes of situations/plays if the team can believe in our strategy. I also have a gift of motivating and leading others to believe in something bigger than themselves and to achieve a goal or create a plan.

P3: By studying what gifts we have and implementing them into our daily lives.

P5: Asking, Studying, and Acting

P9: I think using your spiritual gift is very important. Like me again, I like to sing. I participate in every Christmas play and choir since I was 3. I enjoy it. I think being able to express yourself in different ways of faith is great. Again not everyone can sing. We all have our strengths. Now with me joining a choir now I can use it more. After taking the test and seeing the results I'm trying to think how those gifts will help me spread his work. I think I'm more of a person to help with things that will have a larger impact on people.

P11: I believe spiritual gifts can be more valuable than offerings. We can put our gifts into action just like Jesus used Peter, by us feeding his sheep too. The gifts assessment will help to grow the church & provide programs, ministry & service to the congregation & community.

#### **2. How can you optimize the highest Kingdom use of your spiritual gift within church ministry?**

P1: By being totally dependent and obedient to God.

P2: The wording of this question has me stumped a little. How can I use my spiritual gift in the “church?” I’m not educated enough in the word to feel comfortable enough to use my spiritual gifts in the church. I feel the community is my ‘church’ walls, which allow me to use my spiritual gifts in leadership, giving, serving, and motivating. I am using

these gifts in a manner to help individuals reach their potential in life. I feel if I was educated in the word, that would increase my spiritual gift and in turn, I would be able to increase my influence on others to join the church.

P3: Leading by example and surround yourself with people who are within the church ministry.

P9: The highest use of our spiritual gift is to hopefully spread his love to people in ways they might understand.

P11: To help sheep find the shepherd. Be that spiritual light that guides others to Christ...

### **3. How can your gift be a blessing to one who's an unbeliever? Explain.**

P1: By being an example as Christ was.

P3: By keeping their spirit lifted and motivated while sharing your testimony to them and show all what God has done in my life and what he can do in theirs.

P5: By helping unbelievers get to know the Holy Spirit.

P9: Even though singing wasn't in my top 3 spiritual gifts, I think using my gift that God gave me to sing can change someone's life. My parents have always told me I need to use my voice to spread his Word. I think that is my greatest gift.

P11: Through the behaviors we model. The fruit we produce. Let our actions lead others to ask what must I do...not beat them with biblical teachings & quotes. These quotes are the things that have turned many away from God as before they see the behavior modeled they see hypocrites begging for money.

**APPENDIX G**  
**JOURNAL FOCUS TOPICS**

## JOURNAL FOCUS TOPICS

**Week 1:** In what ways have you experienced discipleship in your life/today?

**Week 2:** What areas in my life have I given Jesus space? What areas have remained inaccessible?

**Week 3:** Throughout this week, intentionally consider and list ways that men who are disciples of Jesus Christ could meet the needs of the community.

**Week 4:** Throughout this week, intentionally consider: How am I following the model? How can I better follow the model Jesus uses?

**Week 5:** Throughout this week, intentionally consider: What difference is being made in my life?

**Week 6:** Throughout this week, intentionally consider: How would you restructure and or make an impact within Disciples Men's Ministry utilizing your spiritual gifts? (Involvement, Leadership, Studies, Activities, Events, etc.) THINK BIG!!!!

**APPENDIX H**  
**DATA FROM JOURNAL ENTRIES**

## DATA FROM JOURNAL ENTRIES

**\*Week 1: In what ways have you experienced discipleship in your life/today?**

P1: To love God 1<sup>st</sup> above everything else in this world.

P2: I experienced discipleship coaching and in the barbershop - titles I carry outside of the home. Those are positions where I serve others on a daily basis. Coaching – I have 5 assistant coaches and 20-30 young impressionable females who look to me for guidance and structure. On a daily basis I find myself having to be presentable, researching, teaching, communicating and being mindful of my presentation, my words, and delivery. Trust, there are days when I don't feel like being bothered or want to go to practice but I sacrifice my personal feelings and thoughts to serve others and to assure that their experiences are memorable. As a barber, I find myself in therapy sessions with individuals who just trust me with their deepest thoughts/demons that they are struggling with daily. I try to empathize and give them some good advice to help them through their daily challenges. A lot of times, I find myself just listening. I find just allowing them space to vent without any type of judgement or negative feedback. I try to find the positive in all situations.

P3: By sharing my testimony and sharing the Word of God and working and volunteering in the church, while trying to live my life the way God intended us to be.

P7: My marriage to my 2<sup>nd</sup> wife has been the largest example. It's increased my love for God, made me endure lots of suffering. Tested my patience, forgiveness, honouring my word, trust, love for another, etc. I've been provided co-workers and family that I have helped and they have helped me as well. Even in my quest to become closer to God. Of course, Pastor Holmes and Pastor Hash's spiritual guidance and direction in my life.

P9: I think the best example of me experiencing discipleship is from my family. For as long as I could remember my Mom and Dad really instilled in my sisters and I lives, Christ. We were always taught to pray, go to church, sing in the choir, attend Bible study. I think the older I got the more I understood exactly what they were telling me. I don't know what life is without Christ.

**\*Week 2: What areas in my life have I given Jesus space? What areas have remained inaccessible?**

P1: 1) To allow time each day to read and study God's Word 2) Not spending enough time with God in prayer & worship

P2: Still processing this question. I treat people the way I want to be treated. I lend a helping hand. I sacrifice my time for others. Is this me giving Jesus space in my life, in my actions? I've made sacrifices, stopped smoking marijuana, heavy drinking, removed myself from individuals who I felt would have a negative impact on my family/livelihood. I think things through with a clear mind and clear heart. And there are

times where I do pray. I feel I am in a place in my life where I need Jesus accessible to all aspects of my life in order to carry out my purpose, which is to serve.

P3: I feel like I've given Jesus space in my social life and my marriage life more. My personal life I feel that I could give Jesus more room and since working at the church I feel the space getting bigger.

P4: He has space for me in the morning when I am able to get up. I have food on my table, shelter, roof over my head, have prayer time every day, and kiss my wife and my children and grandchildren.

P7: I've given space in all areas, but the two that I could do more is church and in my mind. Church is a given because I haven't yet found my purpose or become more involved in my community. In my heart, Jesus has full access but in my mind it sometimes becomes harder. Not by me following any bad or sinful thoughts or behaviors. Moreso it's trying to walk under Jesus' teachings, while someone else willingly disobeys the Lord, which causes me to stray from my path occasionally.

P9: I think that I have given him some space but I definitely need to give him more. I realize that I mostly only pray to him when I need him/need help. Instead I should give him thanks more often. I should get back to the routine I had as a kid. I would say the simple prayer everyday: Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Keep me safely through the night and wake me in the morning light. Amen. I think that when we are young it's easier for us to have a routine but the older we get we have become disconnected to things. It's nothing to say a quick prayer every night. Just make that small time for him. I'm almost sure it will make me feel better when I wake up.

P10: The politics of disciples in this church keep me from being fulfilled in my role of being a better disciple. ?? I have given Jesus space in my conscience thinking. When I do things I use what I think is His voice guiding me. I humble myself before Him before responding and doing. I look for Him in all spaces. I don't think I have made space inaccessible to God. What I do in my humble spirit, at times, I don't listen to him try to do what is best for the other person or people even if I think it's not in His will. Or, I override His voice when my emotions are high, good or bad and reclaim that space...

**\*Week 3: Throughout this week, intentionally consider and list ways that men who are disciples of Jesus Christ could meet the needs of the community.**

P1: Community needs to hear "good positive news". Invite the community to church. Food banks? Clothing bank?

P2: This week I took a group of individuals on a team bonding trip. We went to fellowship, build skills, communicate & show positive male role models. Being present in your children's lives – We need fathers to step up for their children. And not to expect anything out of acts of kindness. Just take initiative to do something because you see it needs to be done.

P3: One thing I often think about is that when Jesus went around spreading the gospel all of the disciples weren't perfect and they all had their own issues, like this community.

P4: Showing compassion and empathy to the people in the community by talking and witnessing to them.

P7: The biggest way is to provide a good reflection of Jesus. Listen, help, guide, and always be seeking a better understanding of how to be a helping hand to the community. Any way that shows you care about another person and wanting the best for them. It doesn't matter if it's one person or a group.

P9: Donate to Rescue Mission. Volunteer. Sing at the Rescue Mission weekly service. Sign up for a Big Brother Program. Have a community picnic. Attend different events from all walks of life. Jail visits. Visit people in Nursing Homes. Visit people in Rehab. Visit people in Mental hospitals. Listen to what people have to say and think before making assumptions.

**\*Week 4: Throughout this week, intentionally consider: How am I following the model? How can I better follow the model Jesus uses?**

P1: I could always show improvement through my "witness of behavior."

P2: Ways to better myself with Jesus model is to study the words of God and pray daily. I find myself in situation daily where if I don't agree and understand the issue I'll remove myself to avoid conflict because I don't want frustration. I'll need to increase more reading of Bible to educate myself on how Jesus would handle the matter. I find myself praying at times of joy when my family is receiving blessing, but during those times of chaos I have to find my way to prayer.

P4: The disciples followed Jesus to be a better person. The disciples listened to his teaching, coaching, challenging. Pray. Get to know the model. Strive to live like Jesus. Share the model with the blessing of the food, your life, and share Jesus.

P7: It's not whether I feel or think that I'm following His model because it can only be truly determined by the impact I have on others I come in contact with. We can tell ourselves we're following the model, but it's what we generate out of others is the truth. It's the impression we make, shows the model. Ways I could better follow: Pray more, spread the Word more, choosing my words better in certain situations, be more sociable, not letting my emotions get the better of me sometimes, get more involved in the community, read the Bible more, putting more faith in God in a given situation

P9: I think I could do better by speaking about him more. I'm not the type of person that can quote bible verse and I'm usually not super comfortable talking about a "controversial" topic like God. When I went to college it was a shock to me. What a different world it is. There are A LOT of people who don't believe. That made me hide

my faith. But now I am grown and should not be ashamed. Start off small and until I'm comfortable I can speak more.

**\*Week 5: Throughout this week, intentionally consider: What difference is being made in my life?**

P1: I have more passion to study God's Word. My thankfulness and awareness for all the things received from God has increased.

P2: My focus throughout the week is making sure I am communicating effectively. I want to ensure my delivery is received in a manner which I care. My passion for things can come off as frustration if I meet or interact with someone who should match my level of passion and doesn't. I need to be more compassionate of others' feelings and thoughts when communicating. I am also working on being consistent with my message. Practice what I preach.

P4: With a focus on compassion, servant leadership, and empowerment. Jesus' leadership still remains a timeless example for leadership in all walks of life.

P7: Not really sure what the question is asking. It's very vague. Transformation? Discipleship? This project as a whole? Realizing how much we fall short? How much more that we need to work on ourselves to become a better follower of Jesus and child of God?

P9: I think a big difference for me is trying to pray every day like I mentioned before. I need to show him more love every day and not just on Sunday. But I am wondering if other ways than just praying show him love. One thing about me is that I love to sing and listen to music 24/7. Often on my drive to work I listen to some type of Gospel music. I think even though I love to sing those songs, am I singing just because I like them or am I singing them because I am praising him? Could that be my way of praying and thanking him every day? We all have our own ways of expressing our faith. I think singing is mine. But I do think I need to spend more time praying and studying his word.

P11: I am continually being made aware of my influence on others through my words, actions, & coaching sessions. It continues to humble my spirit before I talk or act. And when I act or speak without prayer, I at times regret my initial comments or actions.

**\*Week 6: Throughout this week, intentionally consider: How would you restructure and or make an impact within Disciples Men's Ministry utilizing your spiritual gifts? (Involvement, Leadership, Studies, Activities, Events, etc.? ) THINK BIG!!!!**

P1: I need to pray about this.

P7: I can't answer this section because I don't know what my spiritual gift is. I did the handout from earlier this year, but my wife said I scored myself unfairly (lower than she believed on many questions). It actually caused an argument in my household. So just as

I don't yet know my purpose in life, neither do I know my spiritual gift either. I guess some of that comes from being your own worse critic. I just submit to God's will. My overall thought is this project is good for self-reflection, and trying to figure out where you are on your journey with God. It's honestly helped me to realize: I need to work more on my personal relationship with God; That I'm not a church or spiritual leader; I'm not being called to discipleship; I'm not a shepherd...still in the flock; "It might be easy to say the right thing, it's a lot harder to do the right thing."

P9: Well that's a hard question. I think something I have noticed and something that has been said from people older than me. There's a core group of people or ministry/organization for people straight out of college 22-30 in the church. We go from being the youth at the church to be kind of stuck in between being the youth at the church and the older people. There's no in between. I feel like someone needs to be there...Yeah we are "adults" but we are young adults. It's a big difference. I know that everyone that I grew up with at Loudon Avenue are gone or don't attend church (it's mainly Kiana Bell & Z ). Literally everyone is gone. I think that without that Young Adult Ministry it's hard sometimes to feel like we belong. We spent years being recognized and praised on 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday's plays and youth recognition, but when we graduate there's really nothing being done for the young adults. I think that if there is nothing there, attendance in all churches will be low. We are the future. P.S. I am not volunteering to start up a young adult ministry. Don't even know where to begin.

P11: My Think Big is based on having committed men, developing a bond over years, so that when 10 are out, 15 are ready to keep the D.O.M. operating at a high level. There is an elitess air among some of the members, that should be more humble. You cannot continue to pick & choose who can participate because of past behaviors before finding God. And then because of a spiritual gift ignore their past & elevate that person. Elevate those that are willing, make them feel accepted & while on their journey, let God continue to touch them & guide them & let the leaders of the church, with an abundance of grace, become mentors, or better servant leaders.

**APPENDIX I**  
**LOUDON AVENUE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST**

A MODEL FOR REVITALIZING MEN'S  
MINISTRY: AN INTENTIONAL  
DISCIPLESHPIN PROCESS

Anthony L. Holmes, Sr.

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO  
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Dayton, Ohio  
May 2024  
**LOUDON AVENUE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TEST**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ I am skilled at organizing people to accomplish many different tasks and objectives.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I want to establish and equip new churches and/or ministries.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I can easily determine whether a statement is true to Scripture or not.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I can clearly and effectively communicate the Gospel to others.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ I seek to inspire others who are facing difficulties in their faith.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ I live confidently knowing that God is intimately concerned and involved with my life.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ I live a simple lifestyle so that I can give a larger portion of my income to The Lord's work.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ People often ask me my perspective or interpretation of specific passages of Scripture.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Others tend to follow my lead.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ I have great empathy for those who are facing difficult life challenges.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ I am very protective of the spiritual well-being of others.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ At times God has given me a message for an individual or group and compelled me to speak it to them.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy doing everyday tasks that support the various ministries of the church.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ I spend large amounts of time studying the Word of God knowing that my effort will make a difference in someone's life.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ I often have helpful insights into situations that have not been made clear to others.
16. \_\_\_\_\_ I can clearly see what needs to be done and implement a plan to make it happen.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Cultural boundaries do not hinder my work to expand the kingdom of God.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ I pay attention to what people say and how they say it, particularly those who teach.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ I feel a burden of compassion for those who are lost without Jesus.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ When people are discouraged, I remind them of the power and promises of God found in Scripture.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ I trust God completely to answer my prayers according to His perfect will.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ I consistently and joyfully give of my income - often more than a tithe.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ The Spirit has brought to my mind information that I have been able to use to minister to others effectively.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a vision for my church or ministry and I know what needs to be done to accomplish it.
25. \_\_\_\_\_ I see the sick or needy as those who most need the love and comfort that Jesus offers.
26. \_\_\_\_\_ I love spending time nurturing and guiding others in their faith.
27. \_\_\_\_\_ There have been occasions that I have received a revelation from the Lord and spoken it to the church.
28. \_\_\_\_\_ I readily volunteer to help in church when I know it will fill a practical need.
29. \_\_\_\_\_ I effectively communicate the Bible in ways that influence and motivate others to learn more.

30. \_\_\_\_\_ I have learned through my experiences in life and can often guide others who are facing similar difficulties or challenges that I have had.
31. \_\_\_\_\_ I am good at delegating responsibility and trust others to "do their jobs."
32. \_\_\_\_\_ I can minister to people in different cultures effectively.
33. \_\_\_\_\_ I am a quick and accurate judge of character.
34. \_\_\_\_\_ I seek ways to build relationships with non-Christians so that The Lord will use me to share the Gospel with them.
35. \_\_\_\_\_ I am compelled to challenge and inspire growth in those whose faith is stagnant.
36. \_\_\_\_\_ I know God will come through even if I don't see any possible solution to my problem.
37. \_\_\_\_\_ When I give it brings me great joy knowing that more people will be served and touched by the Gospel.
38. \_\_\_\_\_ I study the Bible regularly in order to share truth with others in and outside the church.
39. \_\_\_\_\_ I am not afraid to take risks to advance the kingdom of God through my church or ministry.
40. \_\_\_\_\_ I care deeply about those who are hurting and want to help them navigate through their tough times.
41. \_\_\_\_\_ I desire to help the wounded and lost find healing and shelter in Jesus Christ.
42. \_\_\_\_\_ The Lord has spontaneously given me information about an individual that I felt obligated to confront them with in order to restore them to God.
43. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to serve the Lord "behind the scenes."
44. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to explain deep theological truths in ways that even a child can understand them.
45. \_\_\_\_\_ I often help people by offering Scriptural lessons and principles as solutions to life's various challenges.
46. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to create ways to make things run efficiently in my life and work.
47. \_\_\_\_\_ God has given me influence over several different ministries and/or churches.
48. \_\_\_\_\_ I can readily sense the enemy or a demonic influence in a situation.
49. \_\_\_\_\_ I love to memorize Scripture to share with those who don't know Jesus as their Savior.
50. \_\_\_\_\_ I am not afraid to challenge someone if I know it will foster spiritual growth and boldness in their life.
51. \_\_\_\_\_ I will boldly move forward in a situation if I sense God's calling and provision to do so.
52. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe I have been blessed financially so that I may be a blessing to the church and its mission to reach the lost and help the poor.
53. \_\_\_\_\_ I retain most of what I learn and can recall it quickly when the need arises.
54. \_\_\_\_\_ I can readily identify leaders and love to help them grow in their gifts and abilities.
55. \_\_\_\_\_ I love to see people through the storms of life and show them the compassion that Jesus did.
56. \_\_\_\_\_ I care about the church and do all I can to see it grow and be built up in love.

57. \_\_\_\_\_ God has put in my mind urgent matters that were otherwise unknown that I have announced to the church.
58. \_\_\_\_\_ I set aside time in my week to help those in need in my church and community.
59. \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy communicating the important details of Scripture to others.
60. \_\_\_\_\_ I can see where a group or individual's decisions and actions will lead them, and I offer to guide them in the right direction.
61. \_\_\_\_\_ Details matter to me and I pay special attention to make sure things are done correctly.
62. \_\_\_\_\_ I am qualified and able to establish and lead a new church or ministry.
63. \_\_\_\_\_ I can often tell if someone is being deceitful or dishonest before it becomes apparent to others.
64. \_\_\_\_\_ I love to share what Christ has done in my life and how He has changed me.
65. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have told me that my words have compelled them to step out and grow in their faith.
66. \_\_\_\_\_ Even when times are tough, I trust God completely to comfort me and provide for my needs.
67. \_\_\_\_\_ Stewardship is an important discipline in my daily walk with Christ.
68. \_\_\_\_\_ I like to share the truth and insights God has shown me with others.
69. \_\_\_\_\_ People often look to me to lead a group or project.
70. \_\_\_\_\_ I have been known to "care too much" and help others in their time of need.
71. \_\_\_\_\_ I long to see each person in the church fulfilling the Great Commission.
72. \_\_\_\_\_ I have suddenly received a message from God specific to our congregation and shared it for the edification of the entire church.
73. \_\_\_\_\_ If I recognize a need in the church I simply fill it without being asked.
74. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have shared that my teaching is helpful and easy to understand.
75. \_\_\_\_\_ It is humbling to me when someone asks for my guidance, so I take great care to help them.
76. \_\_\_\_\_ I manage my time wisely.
77. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a strong desire to raise up leaders and pastors who will equip the church.
78. \_\_\_\_\_ I have a strong "radar" for false teaching.
79. \_\_\_\_\_ I am not afraid to plead with people to believe that Christ died for their sin and to confess Him as Lord and Savior.
80. \_\_\_\_\_ When others are faced with difficult situations, I boldly tell them of the faithfulness of God towards His people.
81. \_\_\_\_\_ I don't often worry because of my confidence in God's ability and willingness to see me through every circumstance.
82. \_\_\_\_\_ I seek ways to help others financially and share the love of Christ with them.
83. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to relate the truth and realities of the Gospel to all aspects of life.
84. \_\_\_\_\_ I am not afraid to step up and take charge in a crisis situation.
85. \_\_\_\_\_ I seek out those who are deemed "lost causes" and aid them in restoring their lives.
86. \_\_\_\_\_ The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundation of my life and ministry.
87. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have recognized that often God has spoken clearly and directly to them through a message I have shared.

88. \_\_\_\_\_ I believe there is eternal significance in performing mundane tasks and service.
89. \_\_\_\_\_ I love discovering how the Gospel is woven throughout the entire Bible as I increasingly spend time in study.
90. \_\_\_\_\_ I can easily see which plan or strategy is the best one in a given circumstance.
91. \_\_\_\_\_ My desk or workspace is set up so I can access whatever I need quickly.
92. \_\_\_\_\_ Other pastors and leaders often come to me for help and guidance.
93. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have told me that my perceptions or judgments of people, situations, or statements have proved trustworthy.
94. \_\_\_\_\_ Most of my conversations with non-Christians lead to me speaking about my faith in Jesus.
95. \_\_\_\_\_ If a person or a group is stumbling or deviating from the life God has intended for them, I will speak up and press them to remember and return to joyful life in Christ.
96. \_\_\_\_\_ I consistently encourage others to trust God in everything.
97. \_\_\_\_\_ I give generously and without pretense to the ministry of God's people.
98. \_\_\_\_\_ I can usually recall a Scripture verse or passage that applies to a given situation.
99. \_\_\_\_\_ I am more "visionary" than detail-oriented. I concentrate more on the big picture than the day-to-day particulars.
100. \_\_\_\_\_ Others have showed appreciation that I have comforted and ministered to them at a low point in their lives.
101. \_\_\_\_\_ I build others up to be more like Jesus.
102. \_\_\_\_\_ I can recall times the Lord gave a specific message to His church through me.
103. \_\_\_\_\_ I find joy in being a helper and assisting others in their ministries.
104. \_\_\_\_\_ Often the Holy Spirit gives me just the right words to say when I am teaching an individual or group.
105. \_\_\_\_\_ I can often see through the confusion or conflict in a situation and provide a practical and Scriptural solution to it.

**APPENDIX J**  
**DATA FROM SPIRITUAL GIFTS TESTS**

**DATA FROM SPIRITUAL GIFTS TESTS****Top three gifts:**

P1: Prophecy, Administration, Leadership

P2: Mercy, Administration, Prophecy

P7: Administration, Faith, Wisdom

P9: Administration, Leadership, Discernment

P11: Leadership, Apostleship, Knowledge

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